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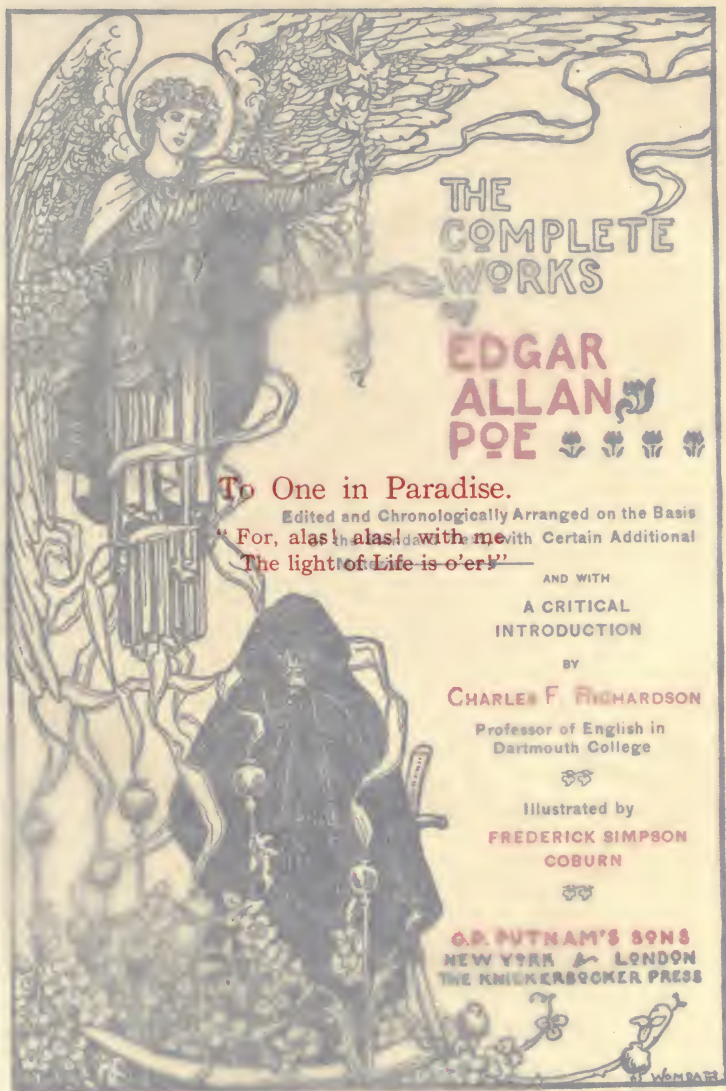
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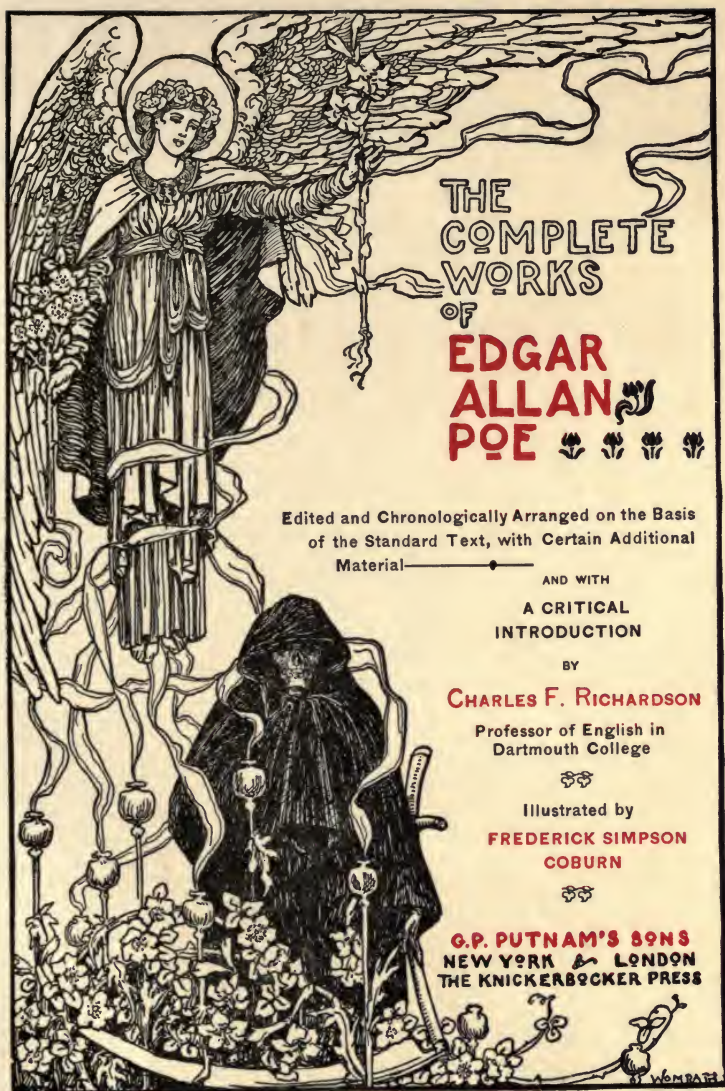




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The One in Paradise.  
For she who waits me  
The light of love is here.



THE  
COMPLETE  
WORKS  
OF  
**EDGAR  
ALLAN  
POE** ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

Edited and Chronologically Arranged on the Basis  
of the Standard Text, with Certain Additional  
Material

AND WITH  
A CRITICAL  
INTRODUCTION

BY  
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❀ ❀  
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**G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS**  
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THE  
COMPLETE WORKS  
OF  
EDGAR ALLAN POE



CRITICISMS

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## CRITICISMS







## The Literati

(Continued from Volume VIII.)

CHRISTOPHER PEARSE CRANCH

**T**HE Reverend C. P. Cranch is one of the least intolerable of the school of Boston transcendentalists; and, in fact, I believe that he has at last "come out from among them," abandoned their doctrines (whatever they are), and given up their company in disgust. He was at one time one of the most noted, and undoubtedly one of the least absurd, contributors to *The Dial*, but has reformed his habits of thought and speech, domiciliated himself in New York, and set up the easel of an artist in one of the Gothic chambers of the University.

About two years ago a volume of *Poems by Christopher Pearse Cranch* was published by Carey & Hart. It was most unmercifully treated by the critics, and much injustice, in my opinion, was done to the poet.

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He seems to me to possess unusual vivacity of fancy and dexterity of expression, while his versification is remarkable for its accuracy, vigor, and even for its originality of effect. I might say, perhaps, rather more than all this, and maintain that he has imagination if he would only condescend to employ it, which he will not, or would not until lately, the word-compounders and quibble-concocters of Frogpondium having inoculated him with a preference for Imagination's half-sister, the Cinderella Fancy. Mr. Cranch has seldom contented himself with harmonious combinations of thought. There must always be, to afford him perfect satisfaction, a certain amount of the odd, of the whimsical, of the affected, of the bizarre. He is full of absurd conceits as Cowley or Donne, with this difference, that the conceits of these latter are euphuisms beyond redemption—flat, irremediable, self-contented nonsensicalities, and in so much are good of their kind; but the conceits of Mr. Cranch are, for the most part, conceits intentionally manufactured, for conceit's sake, out of the material for properly imaginative, harmonious, proportionate, or poetical ideas. We see every moment that he has been at uncommon pains to make a fool of himself.

But perhaps I am wrong in supposing that I am at all in condition to decide on the merits of Mr. C.'s poetry, which is professedly addressed to the few. "Him we will seek," says the poet—

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Him we will seek, and none but him,  
Whose inward sense hath not grown dim;  
Whose soul is steeped in Nature's tinct,  
And to the Universal linked;  
Who loves the beauteous Infinite  
With deep and ever new delight,  
And carrieth where'er he goes  
The inborn sweetness of the rose,  
The perfume as of Paradise,  
The talisman above all price,  
The optic glass that wins from far  
The meaning of the utmost star,  
The key that opes the golden doors  
Where earth and heaven have piled their stores,  
The magic ring, the enchanter's wand,  
The title-deed to Wonder-land,  
The wisdom that o'erlooketh sense,  
The clairvoyance of Innocence.

This is all very well, fanciful, pretty, and neatly turned—all with the exception of the two last lines, and it is a pity they were not left out. It is laughable to see that the transcendental poets, if beguiled for a minute or two into respectable English and common sense, are always sure to remember their cue just as they get to the end of their song, which, by way of salvo, they then round off with a bit of doggerel about "wisdom that o'erlooketh sense" and "the clairvoyance of Innocence." It is especially observable that, in adopting the cant of thought, the cant of phraseology is adopted at the same instant. Can Mr. Cranch,

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or can anybody else, inform me why it is that, in the really sensible opening passages of what I have here quoted, he employs the modern, and only in the final couplet of goosetherumfuddle makes use of the obsolete terminations of verbs in the third person singular, present tense ?

One of the best of Mr. Cranch's compositions is undoubtedly his poem on Niagara. It has some natural thoughts, and grand ones, suiting the subject; but then they are more than half divested of their nature by the attempt at adorning them with oddity of expression. Quaintness is an admissible and important adjunct to ideality, an adjunct whose value has been long misapprehended; but in picturing the sublime it is altogether out of place. What idea of power, of grandeur, for example, can any human being connect even with Niagara, when Niagara is described in language so trippingly fantastical, so palpably adapted to a purpose, as that which follows?

I stood upon a speck of ground;  
Before me fell a stormy ocean.  
I was like a captive bound;  
And around  
A universe of sound  
Troubled the heavens with ever-quivering motion.

Down, down forever—down, down forever—  
Something falling, falling, falling;

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Up, up forever—up, up forever,  
Resting never,  
Boiling up forever,  
Steam-clouds shot up with thunder-bursts appalling.

It is difficult to conceive anything more ludicrously out of keeping than the thoughts of these stanzas and the *petit-maître*, fidgety, hop-skip-and-jump air of the words and the Liliputian parts of the versification.

A somewhat similar metre is adopted by Mr. C. in his *Lines on Hearing Triumphant Music*, but as the subject is essentially different, so the effect is by no means so displeasing. I copy one of the stanzas as the noblest individual passage which I can find among all the poems of its author.

That glorious strain!  
Oh, from my brain  
I see the shadows flitting like scared ghosts!  
A light—a light  
Shines in to-night  
Round the good angels trooping to their posts.  
And the black cloud is rent in twain  
Before the ascending strain.

Mr. Cranch is well educated, and quite accomplished. Like Mr. Osborn he is musician, painter, and poet, being in each capacity very respectably successful.

He is about thirty-three or four years of age; in height, perhaps five feet eleven; athletic; front face not unhandsome, the forehead evincing intellect, and

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the smile pleasant; but the profile is marred by the turning up of the nose, and, altogether, is hard and disagreeable. His eyes and hair are dark brown, the latter worn short, slightly inclined to curl. Thick whiskers meeting under the chin, and much out of keeping with the shirt-collar à la *Byron*. Dresses with marked plainness. He is married.

### SARAH MARGARET FULLER

Miss Fuller was at one time editor, or one of the editors of *The Dial*, to which she contributed many of the most forcible and certainly some of the most peculiar papers. She is known, too, by *Summer on the Lakes*, a remarkable assemblage of sketches, issued in 1844 by Little & Brown, of Boston. More lately she has published *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, a work which has occasioned much discussion, having had the good fortune to be warmly abused and chivalrously defended. At present, she is assistant editor of *The New York Tribune*, or, rather, a salaried contributor to that journal, for which she has furnished a great variety of matter, chiefly notices of new books, etc., etc., her articles being designated by an asterisk. Two of the best of them were a review of Professor Longfellow's late magnificent edition of his own works (with a portrait), and an appeal to the public in behalf of her friend Harro Harring. The review did her in-



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finite credit; it was frank, candid, independent; in even ludicrous contrast to the usual mere glorifications of the day, giving honor only where honor was due, yet evincing the most thorough capacity to appreciate, and the most sincere intention to place in the fairest light, the real and idiosyncratic merits of the poet.

In my opinion it is one of the very few reviews of Longfellow's poems, ever published in America, of which the critics have not had abundant reason to be ashamed. Mr. Longfellow is entitled to a certain and very distinguished rank among the poets of his country; but that country is disgraced by the evident toadyism which would award to his social position and influence, to his fine paper and large type, to his morocco binding and gilt edges, to his flattering portrait of himself, and to the illustrations of his poems by Huntingdon, that amount of indiscriminate approbation which neither could nor would have been given to the poems themselves.

The defence of Harro Harring, or rather the philippic against those who were doing him wrong, was one of the most eloquent and well-put articles I have ever yet seen in a newspaper.

*Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is a book which few women in the country could have written, and no woman in the country would have published, with the exception of Miss Fuller. In the way of independence, of unmitigated radicalism, it is one of the "Curiosities

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of American Literature," and Doctor Griswold should include it in his book. I need scarcely say that the essay is nervous, forcible, thoughtful, suggestive, brilliant, and to a certain extent scholar-like, for all that Miss Fuller produces is entitled to these epithets; but I must say that the conclusions reached are only in part my own. Not that they are too bold, by any means, too novel, too startling, or too dangerous in their consequences, but that in their attainment too many premises have been distorted, and too many analogical inferences left altogether out of sight. I mean to say that the intention of the Deity as regards sexual differences, an intention which can be distinctly comprehended only by throwing the exterior (more sensitive) portions of the mental retina casually over the wide field of universal analogy—I mean to say that this intention has not been sufficiently considered. Miss Fuller has erred, too, through her own excessive subjectiveness. She judges woman by the heart and intellect of Miss Fuller, but there are not more than one or two dozens Miss Fullers on the whole face of the earth. Holding these opinions in regard to *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, I still feel myself called upon to disavow the silly, condemnatory criticism of the work which appeared in one of the earlier numbers of *The Broadway Journal*. That article was not written by myself, and was written by my associate, Mr. Briggs.

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The most favorable estimate of Miss Fuller's genius (for high genius she unquestionably possesses) is to be obtained, perhaps, from her contributions to *The Dial* and from her *Summer on the Lakes*. Many of the descriptions in this volume are unrivalled for "graphic-ality" (why is there not such a word?), for the force with which they convey the true by the novel or unexpected, by the introduction of touches which other artists would be sure to omit as irrelevant to the subject. This faculty, too, springs from her subjectiveness, which leads her to paint a scene less by its features than by its effects.

Here, for example, is a portion of her account of Niagara:

"Daily these proportions widened and towered more and more upon my sight, and I got at last a proper foreground for these sublime distances. Before coming away, I think I really saw the full wonder of the scene. After awhile it *so drew me into itself as to inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence.* The perpetual trampling of the waters seized my senses. *I felt that no other sound, however near, could be heard, and would start and look behind me for a foe.* I realized the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force with that in which the

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Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, *images, such as had never haunted it before, or naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks.* Again and again this illusion recurred, and even *after I had thought it over, and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me.* What I liked best was to sit on Table Rock close to the great fall; *there all power of observing details, all separate consciousness was quite lost."*

The truthfulness of the passages italicized will be felt by all; the feelings described are, perhaps, experienced by every (imaginative) person who visits the fall; but most persons, through predominant subjectiveness, would scarcely be conscious of the feelings, or, at best, would never think of employing them in an attempt to convey to others an impression of the scene. Hence so many desperate failures to convey it on the part of ordinary tourists. Mr. William W. Lord, to be sure, in his poem *Niagara* is sufficiently objective; he describes not the fall, but very properly the effect of the fall upon him. He says that it made him think of his own greatness, of his own superiority, and so forth, and so forth; and it is only when we come to think that the thought of Mr. Lord's greatness is quite idiosyncratic, confined exclusively to Mr. Lord, that we are in condition to understand how, in despite of his objectiveness,

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he has failed to convey an idea of anything beyond one Mr. William W. Lord.

From the essay entitled *Philip Van Artevelde*, I copy a paragraph which will serve at once to exemplify Miss Fuller's more earnest (declamatory) style, and to show the tenor of her prospective speculations:

" At Chicago I read again *Philip Van Artevelde*, and certain passages in it will always be in my mind associated with the deep sound of the lake, as heard in the night. I used to read a short time at night, and then open the blind to look out. The moon would be full upon the lake, and the calm breath, pure light, and the deep voice harmonized well with the thought of the Flemish hero. When will this country have such a man? It is what she needs—no thin idealist, no coarse realist, but a man whose eye reads the heavens while his feet step firmly on the ground, and his hands are strong and dexterous in the use of human instruments. A man, religious, virtuous, and—sagacious; a man of universal sympathies, but self-possessed; a man who knows the region of emotion, though he is not its slave; a man to whom this world is no mere spectacle or fleeting shadow, but a great, solemn game, to be played with good heed, for its stakes are of eternal value, yet who, if his own play be true, heeds not what he loses by the falsehood of others. A man who lives from the past, yet knows that its honey can but moder-



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ately avail him; whose comprehensive eye scans the present, neither infatuated by its golden lures nor chilled by its many ventures; who possesses prescience, as the wise man must, but not so far as to be driven mad to-day by the gift which discerns to-morrow. When there is such a man for America, the thought which urges her on will be expressed."

From what I have quoted a general conception of the prose style of the authoress may be gathered. Her manner, however, is infinitely varied. It is always forcible; but I am not sure that it is always anything else, unless I say picturesque. It rather indicates than evinces scholarship. Perhaps only the scholastic, or, more properly, those accustomed to look narrowly at the structure of phrases, would be willing to acquit her of ignorance of grammar; would be willing to attribute her slovenliness to disregard of the shell in anxiety for the kernel, or to waywardness, or to affection, or to blind reverence for Carlyle; would be able to detect, in her strange and continual inaccuracies, a capacity of the accurate.

"I cannot sympathize with such an apprehension; the spectacle is *capable* to swallow *up* all such objects."

"It is fearful, too, to know, as you look, that whatever has been swallowed by the cataract, is *like* to rise suddenly to light."

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"I took our *mutual* friends to see her."

"It was always obvious that they had nothing in common *between them*."

"The Indian cannot be looked at truly *except* by a poetic eye."

"McKenney's *Tour to the Lakes* gives some facts not to be met *with* elsewhere."

"There is that mixture of culture and rudeness in the aspect of things as gives a feeling of freedom," etc., etc., etc.

These are merely a few, a very few instances, taken at random from among a multitude of wilful murders committed by Miss Fuller on the American of President Polk. She uses, too, the word "ignore," a vulgarity adopted only of late days (and to no good purpose, since there is no necessity for it) from the barbarisms of the law, and makes no scruple of giving the Yankee interpretation to the verbs "witness" and "realize," to say nothing of "use," as in the sentence, "I used to read a short time at night." It will not do to say, in defence of such words, that in such senses they may be found in certain dictionaries—in that of Bolles, for instance; *some* kind of "authority" may be found for any kind of vulgarity under the sun.

In spite of these things, however, and of her frequent unjustifiable Carlyleisms (such as that of writing sentences which are no sentences, since, to be parsed,

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reference must be had to sentences preceding), the style of Miss Fuller is one of the very best with which I am acquainted. In general effect, I know no style which surpasses it. It is singularly piquant, vivid, terse, bold, luminous; leaving details out of sight, it is everything that a style need be.

I believe that Miss Fuller has written much poetry, although she has published little. That little is tainted with the affectation of the transcendentalists (I use this term, of course, in the sense which the public of late days seem resolved to give it), but is brimful of the poetic sentiment. Here, for example, is something in Coleridge's manner, of which the author of *Genevieve* might have had no reason to be ashamed:

A maiden sat beneath a tree;  
Tear-bedewed her pale cheeks be,  
And she sighed heavily.

From forth the wood into the *light*  
A hunter strides with carol *light*,  
And a glance so bold and bright.

He careless stopped and eyed the maid:  
"Why weepest thou?" he gently said;  
"I love thee well, be not afraid."

He takes her hand and leads her on—  
She should have waited there alone,  
For he was not her chosen one.



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He *leans* her head upon his breast—  
She knew 't was not her home of rest,  
But, ah, she had been sore distress.

The sacred stars looked sadly down;  
The parting moon appeared to frown,  
To see thus dimmed the diamond crown.

Then from the thicket starts a deer—  
The huntsman, seizing *on* his spear,  
Cries: "Maiden, wait thou for me here."

She sees him vanish into night—  
She starts from sleep in deep affright,  
For it was not her own true knight.

Though but in dream Gunhilda failed,  
Though but a fancied ill assailed,  
Though she but fancied fault bewailed,—

Yet thought of day makes dream of night;  
She is not worthy of the knight;  
The inmost altar burns not bright.

If loneliness thou canst not bear—  
Cannot the dragon's venom dare—  
Of the pure meed thou shouldst despair.

Now sadder that lone maiden sighs;  
Far bitterer tears profane her eyes;  
Crushed in the dust her heart's flower lies.

To show the evident carelessness with which this poem was constructed, I have italicized an identical rhyme (of about the same force in versification as an

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identical proposition in logic) and two grammatical improprieties. "To lean" is a neuter verb, and "seizing on" is not properly to be called a pleonasm, merely because it is—nothing at all. The concluding line is difficult of pronunciation through excess of consonants. I should have preferred, indeed, the antepenultimate tristich as the *finale* of the poem.

The supposition that the book of an author is a thing apart from the author's self, is, I think, ill-founded. The soul is a cipher, in the sense of a cryptograph; and the shorter a cryptograph is, the more difficulty there is in its comprehension; at a certain point of brevity it would bid defiance to an army of Champollions. And thus he who has written very little may in that little either conceal his spirit or convey quite an erroneous idea of it,—of his acquirements, talents, temper, manner, tenor, and depth (or shallowness) of thought; in a word, of his character, of himself. But this is impossible with him who has written much. Of such a person we get (from his books) not merely a just, but the most just, representation. Bulwer, the individual, personal man, in a green velvet waistcoat and amber gloves, is not by any means the veritable Sir Edward Lytton, who is discoverable only in *Ernest Maltravers*, where his soul is deliberately and nakedly set forth. And who would ever know Dickens by looking at him, or talking with him, or doing anything with him except reading his *Old Curiosity Shop*?

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What poet, in especial, but must feel at least the better portion of himself more fairly represented in even his commonest sonnet (earnestly written) than in his most elaborate or most intimate personalities ?

I put all this as a general proposition, to which Miss Fuller affords a marked exception,—to this extent, that her personal character and her printed book are merely one and the same thing. We get access to her soul as directly from the one as from the other, no more readily from this than from that, easily from either. Her acts are bookish, and her books are less thoughts than acts. Her literary and her conversational manner are identical. Here is a passage from her *Summer on the Lakes* :

“The rapids enchanted me far beyond what I expected; they are so swift that they cease to *seem* so; you can think only of their *beauty*. The fountain beyond the Moss islands I discovered for myself, and thought it for some time an *accidental* beauty which it would not do to *leave*, lest I might never see it again. After I found it *permanent*, I returned many times to watch the play of its crest. In the little waterfall beyond, Nature seems, as she often does, to have made a *study* for some larger design. She delights in this; a sketch within a sketch, a dream within a *dream*. Wherever we see it, the lines of the great buttress, in the fragment of stone, the hues of the waterfall, copied

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in the flowers that *star* its bordering mosses, we are *delighted*; for all the lineaments become *fluent*, and we mould the scene in congenial thought with its *genius*."

Now all this is precisely as Miss Fuller would speak it. She is perpetually saying just such things in just such words. To get the conversational woman in the mind's eye, all that is needed is to imagine her reciting the paragraph just quoted; but first let us have the personal woman. She is of the medium height; nothing remarkable about the figure; a profusion of lustrous light hair; eyes a bluish-gray, full of fire; capacious forehead; the mouth when in repose indicates profound sensibility, capacity for affection, for love—when moved by a slight smile, it becomes even beautiful in the intensity of this expression; but the upper lip, as if impelled by the action of involuntary muscles, habitually uplifts itself, conveying the impression of a sneer. Imagine, now, a person of this description looking you at one moment earnestly in the face, at the next seeming to look only within her own spirit, or at the wall; moving nervously every now and then in her chair; speaking in a high key, but musically, deliberately (not hurriedly or loudly), with a delicious distinctness of enunciation,—speaking, I say, the paragraph in question, and emphasizing the words which I have italicized, not by impulsion of the breath

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(as is usual), but by drawing them out as long as possible, nearly closing her eyes the while,—imagine all this, and we have both the woman and the authoress before us.

### JAMES LAWSON

Mr. Lawson has published, I believe, only *Giordano*, a tragedy, and two volumes entitled *Tales and Sketches by a Cosmopolite*. The former was condemned (to use a gentle word) some years ago at the Park Theatre; and never was condemnation more religiously deserved. The latter are in so much more tolerable than the former, that they contain one non-execrable thing, *The Dapper Gentleman's Story*, in manner, as in title, an imitation of one of Irving's *Tales of a Traveller*.

I mention Mr. L., however, not on account of his literary labors, but because, although a Scotchman, he has always professed to have greatly at heart the welfare of American letters. He is much in the society of authors and booksellers, converses fluently, tells a good story, is of social habits, and, with no taste whatever, is quite enthusiastic on all topics appertaining to taste.

### CAROLINE M. KIRKLAND

Mrs. Kirkland's *New Home*, published under the *nom de plume* of "Mary Clavers," wrought an undoubted sensation. The cause lay not so much in

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picturesque description, in racy humor, or in animated individual portraiture, as in truth and novelty. The West at the time was a field comparatively untrodden by the sketcher or the novelist. In certain works, to be sure, we had obtained brief glimpses of character strange to us sojourners in the civilized East, but to Mrs. Kirkland alone we were indebted for our acquaintance with the home and home-life of the backwoodsman. With a fidelity and vigor that prove her pictures to be taken from the very life, she has represented "scenes" that could have occurred only as and where she has described them. She has placed before us the veritable settlers of the forest, with all their peculiarities, national and individual,—their free and fearless spirit; their homely utilitarian views; their shrewd out-looking for self-interest; their thrifty care and inventions multiform; their coarseness of manner, united with real delicacy and substantial kindness when their sympathies are called into action,—in a word, with all the characteristics of the Yankee, in a region where the salient points of character are unsmoothed by contact with society. So lifelike were her representations that they have been appropriated as individual portraits by many who have been disposed to plead, trumpet-tongued, against what they supposed to be "the deep damnation of their taking-off."

*Forest Life* succeeded *A New Home*, and was read



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with equal interest. It gives us, perhaps, more of the philosophy of Western life, but has the same freshness, freedom, piquancy. Of course, a truthful picture of pioneer habits could never be given in any grave history or essay so well as in the form of narration, where each character is permitted to develop itself; narration, therefore, was very properly adopted by Mrs. Kirkland in both the books just mentioned, and even more entirely in her later volume, *Western Clearings*. This is the title of a collection of tales, illustrative, in general, of Western manners, customs, ideas. *The Land Fever* is a story of the wild days when the madness of speculation in land was at its height. It is a richly characteristic sketch, as is also *The Ball at Thram's Huddle*. Only those who have had the fortune to visit or live in the "back settlements" can enjoy such pictures to the full. *Chances and Changes* and *Love vs. Aristocracy* are more regularly constructed tales, with the "universal passion" as the moving power, but colored with the glowing hues of the West. *The Bee Tree* exhibits a striking but too numerous class among the settlers, and explains, also, the depth of the bitterness that grows out of an unprosperous condition in that "Paradise of the Poor." *Ambuscades* and *Half-Lengths from Life* I remember as two piquant sketches to which an annual, a year or two ago, was indebted for a most unusual sale among the conscious and pen-dreading denizens of the West. *Half-Lengths* turns on

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the trying subject of caste. *The Schoolmaster's Progress* is full of truth and humor. The Western pedagogue, the stiff, solitary, nondescript figure in the drama of a new settlement, occupying a middle position between "our folks" and "company," and "boarding round," is irresistibly amusing, and cannot fail to be recognized as the representative of a class. The occupation, indeed, always seems to mould those engaged in it; they all soon, like Master Horner, learn to "know well what belongs to the pedagogical character, and that facial solemnity stands high on the list of indispensable qualifications. The spelling-school, also, is a "new-country" feature which we owe Mrs. Kirkland many thanks for recording. The incidents of *An Embroidered Fact* are singular and picturesque, but not particularly illustrative of the *Clearings*. The same may be said of *Bitter Fruits from Chance-Sown Seeds*; but this abounds in capital touches of character; all the horrors of the tale are brought about through suspicion of pride, an accusation as destructive at the West as that of witchcraft in olden times, or the cry of "Mad dog" in modern.

In the way of absolute books, Mrs. Kirkland, I believe, has achieved nothing beyond the three volumes specified (with another lately issued by Wiley & Putnam), but she is a very constant contributor to the magazines. Unquestionably, she is one of our best writers, has a province of her own, and in that province



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has few equals. Her most noticeable trait is a certain freshness of style, seemingly drawn, as her subjects in general, from the West. In the second place is to be observed a species of wit, approximating humor, and so interspersed with pure fun, that "wit," after all, is nothing like a definition of it. To give an example, *Old Thoughts on the New Year* commences with a quotation from Tasso's *Aminta* :

Il mondo invecchia  
E invecchiando intristisce;

and the following is given as a "free translation ":

The world is growing older  
And wiser day by day;  
Everybody knows beforehand  
What you 're going to say.  
We used to laugh and frolic—  
Now we must behave:  
Poor old Fun is dead and buried—  
Pride dug his grave.

This, if I am not mistaken, is the only specimen of poetry as yet given by Mrs. Kirkland to the world. She has afforded us no means of judging in respect to her inventive powers, although fancy, and even imagination, are apparent in everything she does. Her perceptive faculties enable her to describe with great verisimilitude. Her mere style is admirable, lucid, terse, full of variety, faultlessly pure, and yet bold,—so

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bold as to appear heedless of the ordinary *decora* of composition. In even her most reckless sentences, however, she betrays the woman of refinement, of accomplishment, of unusually thorough education. There are a great many points in which her general manner resembles that of Willis, whom she evidently admires. Indeed, it would not be difficult to pick out from her works an occasional Willisism, not less palpable than happy. For example :

*"Peaches were like little green velvet buttons when George was first mistaken for Doctor Beaseley, and before they were ripe he, etc."*

And again :

"Mr. Hammond is fortunately settled in our neighborhood, for the present at least ; and he has the neatest little cottage in the world, standing, too, under a very tall oak, which bends kindly over it, looking like the Princess Glumdalclitch inclining her ear to the box which contained her pet Gulliver."

Mrs. Kirkland's personal manner is an echo of her literary one. She is frank, cordial, yet sufficiently dignified, even bold, yet especially ladylike ; converses with remarkable accuracy as well as fluency ; is brilliantly witty, and now and then not a little sarcastic, but a general amiability prevails.

She is rather above the medium height ; eyes and

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hair dark; features somewhat small, with no marked characteristics, but the whole countenance beams with benevolence and intellect.

### PROSPER M. WETMORE

General Wetmore occupied some years ago quite a conspicuous position among the *littérateurs* of New York City. His name was seen very frequently in *The Mirror*, and in other similar journals, in connection with brief poems and occasional prose compositions. His only publication in volume form, I believe, is *The Battle of Lexington and Other Poems*, a collection of considerable merit, and one which met a very cordial reception from the press.

Much of this cordiality, however, is attributable to the personal popularity of the man, to his facility in making acquaintances, and his tact in converting them into unwavering friends.

General Wetmore has an exhaustless fund of vitality. His energy, activity, and indefatigability are proverbial, not less than his peculiar sociability. These qualities give him unusual influence among his fellow-citizens, and have constituted him (as precisely the same traits have constituted his friend General Morris) one of a standing committee for the regulation of a certain class of city affairs, such, for instance, as the getting up of a complimentary benefit, or a public demonstration of

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respect for some deceased worthy, or a ball and dinner to Mr. Irving or Mr. Dickens.

Mr. Wetmore is not only a General, but Naval Officer of the Port of New York, Member of the Board of Trade, one of the Council of the Art Union, one of the Corresponding Committee of the Historical Society, and of more other committees than I can just now remember. His manners are *recherchés*, courteous, a little in the old-school way. He is sensitive, punctilious; speaks well, roundly, fluently, plausibly, and is skilled in pouring oil upon the waters of stormy debate.

He is, perhaps, fifty years of age, but has a youthful look; is about five feet eight in height, slender, neat, with an air of military compactness; looks especially well on horseback.

### EMMA C. EMBURY

Mrs. Embury is one of the most noted, and certainly one of the most meritorious of our female *littérateurs*. She has been many years before the public, her earliest compositions, I believe, having been contributed to the *New York Mirror* under the *nom de plume* "Ianthe." They attracted very general attention at the time of their appearance, and materially aided the paper. They were subsequently, with some other pieces, published in volume form, with the title *Guido and Other Poems*. The book has been long out of print. Of late days its author has written but little poetry; that little,

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however, has at least indicated a poetic capacity of no common order.

Yet as a poetess she is comparatively unknown, her reputation in this regard having been quite overshadowed by that which she has acquired as a writer of tales. In this latter capacity she has, upon the whole, no equal among her sex in America, certainly no superior. She is not so vigorous as Mrs. Stephens, nor so vivacious as Miss Chubbuck, nor so caustic as Miss Leslie, nor so dignified as Miss Sedgwick, nor so graceful, fanciful, and *spirituelle* as Mrs. Osgood, but is deficient in none of the qualities for which these ladies are noted, and in certain particulars surpasses them all. Her subjects are fresh, if not always vividly original, and she manages them with more skill than is usually exhibited by our magazinists. She has also much imagination and sensibility, while her style is pure, earnest, and devoid of verbiage and exaggeration. I make a point of reading all tales to which I see the name of Mrs. Embury appended. The story by which she has attained most reputation is *Constance Latimer, the Blind Girl*.

Mrs. E. is a daughter of Doctor Manly, an eminent physician of New York City. At an early age she married a gentleman of some wealth and of education, as well as of tastes akin to her own. She is noted for her domestic virtues no less than for literary talents and acquirements.

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She is about the medium height; complexion, eyes, and hair, light; arched eyebrows; Grecian nose; the mouth a fine one, and indicative of firmness; the whole countenance pleasing, intellectual, and expressive. The portrait in *Graham's Magazine* for January, 1843, has no resemblance to her whatever.

### EPES SARGENT

Mr. Sargent is well known to the public as the author of *Velasco: A Tragedy*, *The Light of the Light-House*, with *Other Poems*, one or two short novelettes, and numerous contributions to the periodicals. He was also the editor of *Sargent's Magazine*, a monthly work, which had the misfortune of falling between two stools, never having been able to make up its mind whether to be popular with the three or dignified with the five-dollar journals. It was a "happy medium" between the two classes, and met the fate of all happy media in dying, as well through lack of foes as of friends. *In medio tutissimus ibis* is the worst advice in the world for the editor of a magazine. Its observance proved the downfall of Mr. Lowell and his really meritorious *Pioneer*.

*Velasco* has received some words of commendation from the author of *Ion*, and, I am ashamed to say, owes most of its home appreciation to this circumstance. Mr. Talfourd's play has, itself, little truly dramatic, with much picturesque and more poetical,



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value; its author, nevertheless, is better entitled to respect as a dramatist than as a critic of dramas. *Velasco*, compared with American tragedies generally, is a good tragedy; indeed, an excellent one, but, positively considered, its merits are very inconsiderable. It has many of the traits of Mrs. Mowatt's *Fashion*, to which, in its mode of construction, its scenic effects, and several other points, it bears as close a resemblance as, in the nature of things, it could very well bear. It is by no means improbable, however, that Mrs. Mowatt received some assistance from Mr. Sargent in the composition of her comedy, or at least was guided by his advice in many particulars of technicality.

*Shells and Sea-Weeds*, a series of brief poems, recording the incidents of a voyage to Cuba, is, I think, the best work in verse of its author, and evinces a fine fancy, with keen appreciation of the beautiful in natural scenery. Mr. Sargent is fond of sea pieces, and paints them with skill, flooding them with that warmth and geniality which are their character and their due. *A Life on the Ocean Wave* has attained great popularity, but is by no means so good as the less lyrical compositions, *A Calm*, *The Gale*, *Tropical Weather*, and *A Night Storm at Sea*.

*The Light of the Light-House* is a spirited poem, with many musical and fanciful passages, well expressed. For example:

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But, oh, Aurora's crimson light,  
That makes the watch-fire dim,  
Is not a more transporting sight  
Than Ellen is to him.  
He pineth not for fields and brooks,  
Wild flowers and singing birds,  
For summer smileth in her looks  
And singeth in her words.

There is something of the Dibdin spirit throughout the poem, and, indeed, throughout all the sea poems of Mr. Sargent, a little too much of it, perhaps.

His prose is not quite so meritorious as his poetry. He writes "easily," and is apt at burlesque and sarcasm; both rather broad than original. Mr. Sargent has an excellent memory for good hits, and no little dexterity in their application. To those who meddle little with books, some of his satirical papers must appear brilliant. In a word, he is one of the most prominent members of a very extensive American family—the men of industry, talent, and tact.

In stature he is short, not more than five feet five, but well proportioned. His face is a fine one; the features regular and expressive. His demeanor is very gentlemanly. Unmarried, and about thirty years of age.

### FRANCES SARGENT OSGOOD

Mrs. Osgood, for the last three or four years, has been rapidly attaining distinction; and this, evidently, with no effort at attaining it. She seems, in fact, to



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have no object in view beyond that of giving voice to the fancies or the feelings of the moment. "Necessity," says the proverb, "is the mother of invention"; and the invention of Mrs. O., at least, springs plainly from necessity, from the necessity of invention. Not to write poetry, not to act it, think it, dream it, and be it, is entirely out of her power.

It may be questioned whether with more industry, more method, more definite purpose, more ambition, Mrs. Osgood would have made a more decided impression on the public mind. She might, upon the whole, have written better poems; but the chances are that she would have failed in conveying so vivid and so just an idea of her powers as a poet. The warm *abandonnement* of her style, that charm which now so captivates, is but a portion and a consequence of her unworldly nature, of her disregard of mere fame; but it affords us glimpses, which we could not otherwise have obtained, of a capacity for accomplishing what she has not accomplished, and in all probability never will. In the world of poetry, however, there is already more than enough of uncongenial ambition and pretence.

Mrs. Osgood has taken no care whatever of her literary fame. A great number of her finest compositions, both in verse and prose, have been written anonymously, and are now lying *perdus* about the country, in out-of-the-way nooks and corners. Many a goodly

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reputation has been reared upon a far more unstable basis than her unclaimed and uncollected "fugitive pieces."

Her first volume, I believe, was published, seven or eight years ago, by Edward Churton, of London, during the residence of the poetess in that city. I have now lying before me a second edition of it, dated 1842, a beautifully printed book, dedicated to the Reverend Hobard Caunter. It contains a number of what the Bostonians call "juvenile" poems, written when Mrs. O. (then Miss Locke) could not have been more than thirteen, and evincing unusual precocity. The leading piece is *Elfrida: A Dramatic Poem*, but in many respects well entitled to the appellation "drama." I allude chiefly to the passionate expression of particular portions, to delineation of character, and to occasional scenic effect; in construction, or plot, in general conduct and plausibility, the play fails, comparatively, of course, for the hand of genius is evinced throughout.

The story is the well-known one of Edgar, Elfrida, and Earl Athelwood. The king, hearing of Elfrida's extraordinary beauty, commissions his favorite, Athelwood, to visit her and ascertain if report speaks truly of her charms. The earl, becoming himself enamored, represents the lady as anything but beautiful or agreeable. The king is satisfied. Athelwood soon after woos and weds Elfrida, giving Edgar to understand

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that the heiress's wealth is the object. The true state of the case, however, is betrayed by an enemy; and the monarch resolves to visit the earl at his castle and to judge for himself. Hearing of this resolve, Athelwood, in despair, confesses to his wife his duplicity, and entreats her to render null as far as possible the effect of her charms by dressing with unusual plainness. This the wife promises to do; but, fired with ambition and resentment at the wrong done her, arrays herself in her most magnificent and becoming costume. The king is charmed, and the result is the destruction of Athelwood, and the elevation of Elfrida to the throne.

These incidents are well adapted to dramatic purposes, and with more of that art which Mrs. Osgood does not possess she might have woven them into a tragedy which the world would not willingly let die. As it is, she has merely succeeded in showing what she might, should, and could have done, and yet, unhappily, did not.

The character of Elfrida is the bright point of the play. Her beauty and consciousness of it, her indignation and uncompromising ambition, are depicted with power. There is a fine blending of the poetry of passion and the passion of poetry in the lines which follow:

Why even now he bends  
In courtly reverence to some mincing dame,  
Haply the star of Edgar's festival,

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While I, with this high heart and queenly form,  
Pine in neglect and solitude. Shall it be ?  
Shall I not rend my fetters and be free ?  
Ay!—be the cooing turtle-dove content,  
Safe in her own loved nest!—the eagle soars  
On restless plumes to meet the imperial sun.  
And Edgar is my day-star, in whose light  
This heart's proud wings shall yet be furled to rest.  
Why wedded I with Athelwood ? For this ?  
No!—even at the altar when I stood—  
My hand in his, his gaze upon my cheek—  
I did forget his presence and the scene ;  
A gorgeous vision rose before mine eyes  
Of power and pomp and regal pageantry ;  
A king was at my feet and, as he knelt,  
I smiled and, turning, met—a husband's kiss.  
But still I smiled—for in my guilty soul  
I blessed him as the being by whose means  
I should be brought within my idol's sphere—  
My haughty, glorious, brave, impassioned Edgar!  
Well I remember when these wondering eyes  
Beheld him first. I was a maiden then,  
A dreaming child—but from that thrilling hour  
I've been a queen in visions!

Very similar, but even more glowing, is the love-inspired eloquence of Edgar:

Earth hath no language, love, befitting thee ;  
For its own children it hath pliant speech ;  
And mortals know to call a blossom fair,  
A wavelet graceful, and a jewel rich ;

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But thou! oh, teach me, sweet, the angel tongue  
They talked in heaven ere thou didst leave its bowers  
To bloom below!

To this Elfrida replies:

If Athelwood should hear thee!

And to this, Edgar:

Name not the felon knave to me, Elfrida!  
My soul is flame whene'er I think of him.  
Thou lovest him not?—oh, *say* thou dost not love him!

The answer of Elfrida at this point is profoundly true to nature, and would alone suffice to assure any critic of Mrs. Osgood's dramatic talent:

When but a child I saw thee in my dreams!

The woman's soul here shrinks from the direct avowal of want of love for her husband, and flies to poetry and appeals to fate, by way of excusing that infidelity which is at once her glory and her shame.

In general, the "situations" of *Elfrida* are improbable or ultra-romantic, and its incidents unsequential, seldom furthering the business of the play. The *dénouement* is feeble, and its moral of very equivocal tendency indeed; but I have already shown that it is the especial office neither of poetry nor of the drama to inculcate truth, unless incidentally. Mrs. Osgood, however, although she has unquestionably

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failed in writing a good play, has, even in failing, given indication of dramatic power. The great tragic element, passion, breathes in every line of her composition, and, had she but the art or the patience to model or control it, she might be eminently successful as a playwright. I am justified in these opinions not only by *Elfrida*, but by *Woman's Trust ; A Dramatic Sketch*, included, also, in the English edition.

*A Masked Ball. Madelon and a Stranger in a Recess.*

*Mad.*                      Why hast thou led me here ?  
My friends may deem it strange, unmaidenly,  
This lonely converse with an unknown mask.  
Yet in thy voice there is a thrilling power  
That makes me love to linger. It is like  
The tone of one far distant, only his  
Was gayer and more soft.

*Strang.*                      Sweet Madelon!  
Say thou wilt smile upon the passionate love  
That thou alone canst waken! Let me hope!

*Mad.* Hush! hush! I may not hear thee. Know'st thou not  
I am betrothed ?

*Strang.*                      Alas! too well I know;  
But I could tell thee such a tale of him,  
Thine early love, 't would fire those timid eyes  
With lightning pride and anger, curl that lip,  
That gentle lip to passionate contempt  
For man's light falsehood. Even now he bends—  
Thy Rupert bends o'er one as fair as thou,  
In fond affection. Even now his heart—



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*Mad.* Doth my eye flash ? doth my lip curl with scorn ?  
'T is scorn of thee, thou perjured stranger, not,  
Oh, not of him, the generous and the true !  
Hast thou e'er seen my Rupert ? hast thou met  
Those proud and fearless eyes that never quailed,  
As Falsehood quails, before another's glance—  
As thine even now are shrinking from mine own—  
The spirit beauty of that open brow,  
The noble head, the free and gallant step,  
The lofty mien whose majesty is won  
From inborn honor—hast thou seen all this ?  
And darest thou speak of faithlessness and him  
In the same idle breath ? Thou little know'st  
The strong confiding of a woman's heart,  
When woman loves as—I do. Speak no more !

*Strang.* Deluded girl ! I tell thee he is false—  
False as yon fleeting cloud !

*Mad.* True as the sun !

*Strang.* The very wind less wayward than his heart !

*Mad.* The forest oak less firm ! He loved me not  
For the frail rose-hues and the fleeting light  
Of youthful loveliness ; ah, many a cheek  
Of softer bloom, and many a dazzling eye  
More rich than mine may win my wanderer's gaze.  
He loved me for my love, the deep, the fond—  
For my unfaltering truth ; he cannot find,  
Rove where he will, a heart that beats for him  
With such intense, absorbing tenderness,  
Such idolizing constancy as mine.  
*Why should he change, then ?—I am still the same.*

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*Strang.* Sweet infidel! wilt thou have ruder proof?  
Rememberest thou a little golden case  
Thy Rupert wore, in which a gem was shrined?  
A gem I would not barter for a world—  
An angel face; its *sunny wealth of hair*  
*In radiant ripples bathed the graceful throat*  
*And dimpled shoulders*, round the rosy curve  
Of the sweet mouth a smile seemed wandering ever,  
While in the depths of azure fire that gleamed  
Beneath the drooping lashes slept a world  
Of eloquent meaning, passionate yet pure,  
Dreamy, subdued, but oh, how beautiful!  
A look of timid, pleading tenderness  
That should have been a talisman to charm  
His restless heart for aye. Rememberest thou?

*Mad. (impatiently)* I do—I do remember—it was my own.  
He prized it as his life—I gave it him—  
What of it!—speak!

*Strang. (showing a miniature)* Lady, behold that gift!

*Mad. (clasping her hands)* Merciful Heaven! is my  
Rupert dead?  
(*after a pause, during which she seems overwhelmed with agony*)  
How died he?—when?—oh, thou wast by his side  
In that last hour and I was far away!  
My blessed love!—give me that token!—speak!  
What message sent he to his Madelon?

*Strang. (supporting her and strongly agitated)*  
He is not dead, dear lady! grieve not thus!

*Mad. He is not false, sir stranger!*



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*Strang.* For thy sake,  
Would he were worthier! One other proof  
I 'll give thee, loveliest! if thou lov'st him still,  
I 'll not believe thee woman. Listen, then!  
A faithful lover breathes not of his bliss  
To other ears. Wilt hear a fable, lady?

Here the stranger details some incidents of the first wooing of Madelon by Rupert, and concludes with,

Lady, my task is o'er—dost doubt me still?

*Mad.* Doubt thee, my Rupert! ah, I know thee now.  
Fling by that hateful mask!—let me unclasp it!  
No! thou wouldst *not* betray thy Madelon.

The Miscellaneous Poems of the volume, many of them written in childhood, are, of course, various in character and merit. *The Dying Rosebud's Lament*, although by no means one of the best, will very well serve to show the earlier and most characteristic manner of the poetess:

Ah, me!—ah, woe is me  
That I should perish now,  
*With the dear sunlight just let in*  
*Upon my balmy brow!*

*My leaves, instinct with glowing life,*  
*Were quivering to uncloze;*  
*My happy heart with love was rife—*  
*I was almost a rose.*

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Nerved by a hope, warm, rich, intense,  
*Already I had risen*  
*Above my cage's curving fence,*  
*My green and graceful prison.*

My pouting lips, by Zephyr pressed,  
*Were just prepared to part,*  
*And whispered to the wooing wind*  
*The rapture of my heart.*

*In new-born fancies revelling,*  
My mossy cell half riven,  
*Each thrilling leaflet seemed a wing*  
*To bear me into heaven.*

How oft, while yet an *infant flower,*  
*My crimson cheek I've laid*  
*Against the green bars of my bower,*  
*Impatient of the shade ;*

*And pressing up and peeping through*  
*Its small but precious vistas,*  
*Sighed for the lovely light and dew*  
*That blessed my elder sisters !*

I saw the *sweet breeze rippling* o'er  
Their leaves that loved the play,  
Though the light thief stole all the store  
Of dew-drop gems away.

I thought how happy I should be  
Such diamond wreaths to wear,  
And frolic with a rose's glee  
With sunbeam, bird, and air.

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Ah, me!—ah, woe is me, that I,  
Ere yet my leaves uncloze,  
With all my wealth of sweets *must die*  
*Before I am a rose!*

The poetical reader will agree with me that few things have ever been written (by any poet, at any age) more delicately fanciful than the passages italicized; and yet they are the work of a girl not more than fourteen years of age. The clearness and force of expression, and the nice appositeness of the overt and insinuated meaning, are, when we consider the youth of the writer, even more remarkable than the fancy.

I cannot speak of Mrs. Osgood's poems without a strong propensity to ring the changes upon the indefinite word "grace" and its derivatives. About everything which she writes we perceive this indescribable charm, of which, perhaps, the elements are a vivid fancy and a quick sense of the proportionate. Grace, however, may be most satisfactorily defined as "a term applied, in despair, to that class of the expressions of beauty which admit of no analysis." It is in this irresoluble effect that Mrs. Osgood excels any poetess of her country; and it is to this easily appreciable effect that her popularity is owing. Nor is she more graceful herself than a lover of the graceful, under whatever guise it is presented to her consideration. The sentiment renders itself manifest in innumerable instances as well throughout her prose as her poetry.

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Whatever be her theme, she at once extorts from it its whole essentiality of grace. Fanny Ellsler has been often lauded; true poets have sung her praises; but we look in vain for anything written about her which so distinctly and vividly paints her to the eye as the half-dozen quatrains which follow. They are to be found in the English volume:

She comes!—the spirit of the dance!  
And but for those large eloquent eyes,  
Where passion speaks in every glance,  
She 'd seem a wanderer from the skies.

So light that, *gazing breathless there,*  
*Lest the celestial dream should go,*  
*You 'd think the music in the air*  
*Waved the fair vision to and fro.*

*Or think the melody's sweet flow*  
*Within the radiant creature played,*  
*And those soft wreathing arms of snow*  
*And white sylph feet the music made.*

Now gliding slow with dreamy grace,  
Her eyes beneath their lashes lost,  
Now motionless, with lifted face,  
And small hands on her bosom crossed.

*And now with flashing eyes she springs—*  
*Her whole bright figure raised in air,*  
*As if her soul had spread its wings*  
*And poised her one wild instant there!*

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She spoke not—but, so richly fraught  
With language are her glance and smile,  
*That when the curtain fell, I thought*  
*She had been talking all the while.*

This is, indeed, poetry, and of the most unquestionable kind, poetry truthful in the proper sense; that is to say, breathing of nature. There is here nothing forced or artificial, no hardly sustained enthusiasm. The poetess speaks because she feels; but then what she feels is felt only by the truly poetical. The thought in the last line of the quatrain will not be so fully appreciated by the reader as it should be; for latterly it has been imitated, plagiarized, repeated *ad infinitum*; but the other passages italicized have still left them all their original effect. The idea in the two last lines is exquisitely *naïve* and natural; that in the two last lines of the second quatrain, beautiful beyond measure; that of the whole fifth quatrain, magnificent—unsurpassed in the entire compass of American poetry. It is instinct with the noblest poetical requisite—imagination.

Of the same trait I find, to my surprise, one of the best exemplifications among the “Juvenile Rhymes.”

For Fancy is a fairy that can hear,  
Ever, the melody of Nature's voice  
And see all lovely visions that she will.  
She drew a picture of a beauteous bird  
With plumes of radiant green and gold inwoven,

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Banished from its beloved resting-place,  
And fluttering in vain hope from tree to tree,  
And bade us think how, like it, the sweet season  
From one bright shelter to another fled—  
First from the maple waved her emerald pinions,  
But lingered still upon the oak and elm,  
Till, frightened by rude breezes even from them,  
With mournful sigh she moaned her sad farewell.

The little poem called *The Music Box* has been as widely circulated as any of Mrs. Osgood's compositions. The melody and harmony of this *jeu d'esprit* are perfect, and there is in it a rich tint of that epigrammatism for which the poetess is noted. Some of the intentional epigrams interspersed through the works are peculiarly happy. Here is one which, while replete with the rarest "spirit of point," is yet something more than pointed:

### TO AN ATHEIST POET

Lovest thou the music of the sea?  
Callest thou the sunshine bright?  
His voice is more than melody—  
His smile is more than light.

Here again is something very similar:

Fanny shuts her smiling eyes,  
Then, because she cannot see,  
Thoughtless simpleton! she cries:  
"Ah! you can't see me."



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Fanny 's like the sinner vain  
Who, with spirit shut and dim,  
Thinks, because he sees not Heaven,  
Heaven beholds not him.

Is it not a little surprising, however, that a writer capable of so much precision and finish as the author of these epigrams must be, should have failed to see how much of force is lost in the inversion of "the sinner vain"? Why not have written "Fanny's like the silly sinner"? or, if "silly" be thought too jocose, "the blinded sinner"? The rhythm, at the same time, would thus be much improved by bringing the lines,

Fanny 's like the silly sinner,  
Thinks because he sees not Heaven,

into exact equality.

In mingled epigrams and *espèglerie* Mrs. Osgood is even more especially at home. I have seldom seen anything in this way more happily done than the song entitled *If He Can*.

*The Unexpected Declaration* is, perhaps, even a finer specimen of the same manner. It is one of that class of compositions which Mrs. Osgood has made almost exclusively her own. Had I seen it without her name, I should have had no hesitation in ascribing it to her; for there is no other person, in America certainly, who does anything of a similar kind with anything like a similar piquancy.



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The point of this poem, however, might have been sharpened, and the polish increased in lustre, by the application of the emery of brevity. From what the lover says much might well have been omitted; and I should have preferred leaving out altogether the authorial comments; for the story is fully told without them. The "Why do you weep?" "Why do you frown?" and "Why do you smile?" supply all the imagination requires; to supply more than it requires oppresses and offends it. Nothing more deeply grieves it, or more vexes the true taste in general, than hyperism of any kind. In Germany, *Wohlgeborn* is a loftier title than *Edelgeborn*; and in Greece, the thrice-victorious at the Olympic games could claim a statue of the size of life, while he who had conquered but once was entitled only to a colossal one.

The English collection of which I speak was entitled *A Wreath of Wild Flowers from New England*. It met with a really cordial reception in Great Britain; was favorably noticed by the *Literary Gazette*, *Times*, *Atlas*, *Monthly Chronicle*, and especially by the *Court Journal*, the *Court and Ladies' Magazine*, *La Belle Assemblée*, and other similar works. "We have long been familiar," says the high authority of the *Literary Gazette*, "with the name of our fair author . . . Our expectations have been fulfilled, and we have here a delightful gathering of the sweetest of wild flowers, all looking as fresh and beautiful as if they had grown in

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the richest of English pasture in place of having been 'nursed by the cataract.' True, the wreath might have been improved with a little more care—a trifling attention or two paid to the formation of it. A stalk here and there that obtrudes itself between the bells of the flowers might have become so interwoven as to have been concealed, and the whole have looked as if it had grown in that perfect and beautiful form. Though, after all, we are perhaps too chary; for in nature every leaf is not ironed out to a form, nor propped up with a wiry precision, but blown and ruffled by the refreshing breezes, and looking as careless and easy and unaffected as a child that bounds along with its silken locks tossed to and fro just as the wind uplifts them. Page after page of this volume have we perused with a feeling of pleasure and admiration." The *Court Journal* more emphatically says: "Her wreath is one of violets, sweet-scented, pure, and modest; so lovely that the hand that wove it should not neglect additionally to enrich it by turning her love and kindness to things of larger beauty. Some of the smaller lyrics in the volume are perfectly beautiful,—beautiful in their chaste and exquisite simplicity, and the perfect elegance of their composition." In fact, there was that about *The Wreath of Wild Flowers*,—that inexpressible grace of thought and manner,—which never fails to find ready echo in the hearts of the aristocracy and refinement of Great Britain; and it was

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here especially that Mrs. Osgood found welcome. Her husband's merits as an artist had already introduced her into distinguished society (she was petted in especial, by Mrs. Norton and Rogers), but the publication of her poems had at once an evidently favorable effect upon his fortunes. His pictures were placed in a most advantageous light by her poetical and conversational ability.

Messrs. Clarke & Austin, of New York, have lately issued another, but still a very incomplete collection of *Poems* by Frances S. Osgood. In general, it includes by no means the best of her works. *The Daughter of Herodías*, one of her longest compositions, and a very noble poem, putting me in mind of the best efforts of Mrs. Hemans, is omitted; it is included, however, in the last edition of Dr. Griswold's *Poets and Poetry of America*. In Messrs. C. & A.'s collection there occur, too, very many of those half sentimental, half allegorical compositions of which, at one period, the authoress seemed to be particularly fond, for the reason, perhaps, that they afforded her good opportunity for the exercise of her ingenuity and epigrammatic talent; no poet, however, can admit them to be poetry at all. Still, the volume contains some pieces which enable us to take a new view of the powers of the writer. A few additional years, with their inevitable sorrow, appeared to have stirred the depths of her heart. We see less of frivolity, less of vivacity, more of tenderness, earnest-

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ness, even passion, and far more of the true imagination as distinguished from its subordinate, fancy. The one prevalent trait, grace, alone distinctly remains. *The Spirit of Poetry, To Sybil, The Birth of the Callitriche, and the Child and its Angel-Playmate*, would do honor to any of our poets. *She Loves Him Yet*, nevertheless, will serve, better than either of these poems, to show the alteration of manner referred to. It is not only rhythmically perfect, but it evinces much originality in its structure. The verses commencing, "Yes, lower to the level," are in a somewhat similar tone, but are more noticeable for their terse energy of expression.

In not presenting to the public at one view all that she has written in verse, Mrs. Osgood has incurred the risk of losing that credit to which she is entitled on the score of versatility, of variety in invention and expression. There is scarcely a form of poetical composition in which she has not made experiment; and there is none in which she has not very happily succeeded. Her defects are chiefly negative and by no means numerous. Her versification is sometimes exceedingly good, but more frequently feeble through the use of harsh consonants, and such words as "thou 'dst" for "thou wouldst," with other unnecessary contractions, inversions, and obsolete expressions. Her imagery is often mixed; indeed it is rarely otherwise. The epigrammatism of her conclusions gives to her poems, as

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wholes, the air of being more skilfully constructed than they really are. On the other hand, we look in vain throughout her works for an offence against the finer taste, or against decorum, for a low thought or a platitude. A happy refinement, an instinct of the pure and delicate, is one of the most noticeable excellencies. She may be properly commended, too, for originality of poetic invention, whether in the conception of a theme or in the manner of treating it. Consequences of this trait are her point and piquancy. Fancy and *naïveté* appear in all she writes. Regarding the loftier merits, I am forced to speak of her in more measured terms. She has occasional passages of true imagination, but scarcely the glowing, vigorous, and sustained ideality of Mrs. Maria Brooks, or even, in general, the less ethereal elevation of Mrs. Welby. In that indescribable something, however, which, for want of a more definite term, we are accustomed to call "grace," that charm so magical, because at once so shadowy and so potent, that Will-o'-the-Wisp which, in its supreme development, may be said to involve nearly all that is valuable in poetry, she has, unquestionably, no rival among her countrywomen.

Of pure prose, of prose proper, she has, perhaps, never written a line in her life. Her usual magazine papers are a class by themselves. She begins with a resolute effort at being sedate, that is to say, sufficiently prosaic and matter-of-fact for the purpose of a



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legend or an essay; but after a few sentences we behold uprising the leaven of the Muse; then with a flourish and some vain attempts at repression, a scrap of verse renders itself manifest; then comes a little poem outright; then another and another and another, with impertinent patches of prose in between; until at length the mask is thrown fairly off and far away, and the whole article—sings.

Upon the whole, I have spoken of Mrs. Osgood so much in detail, less on account of what she has actually done than on account of what I perceive in her the ability to do.

In character she is ardent, sensitive, impulsive, the very soul of truth and honor; a worshipper of the beautiful, with a heart so radically artless as to seem abundant in art; universally admired, respected, and beloved. In person, she is about the medium height, slender even to fragility, graceful whether in action or repose; complexion usually pale; hair black and glossy; eyes a clear, luminous gray, large, and with singular capacity for expression.

### LYDIA M. CHILD

Mrs. Child has acquired a just celebrity by many compositions of high merit, the most noticeable of which are *Hobomok*, *Philothea*, and a *History of the Condition of Women*. *Philothea*, in especial, is written

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with great vigor, and, as a classical romance, is not far inferior to the *Anacharsis* of Barthélemy; its style is a model for purity, chastity, and ease. Some of her magazine papers are distinguished for grace and brilliant imagination, a quality rarely noticed in our countrywomen. She continues to write a great deal for the monthlies and other journals, and invariably writes well. Poetry she has not often attempted, but I make no doubt that in this she would excel. It seems, indeed, the legitimate province of her fervid and fanciful nature. I quote one of her shorter compositions, as well to instance (from the subject) her intense appreciation of genius in others as to exemplify the force of her poetic expression:

### MARIUS AMID THE RUINS OF CARTHAGE

Pillars are fallen at thy feet,  
Fanes quiver in the air,  
A prostrate city is thy seat,  
And thou alone art there.

No change comes o'er thy noble brow,  
Though ruin is around thee;  
Thine eyebeam burns as proudly now  
As when the laurel crowned thee.

It cannot bend thy lofty soul  
Though friends and fame depart;  
The car of Fate may o'er thee roll  
Nor crush thy Roman heart.



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And genius hath electric power  
Which earth can never tame;  
Bright suns may scorch and dark clouds lower,  
Its flash is still the same.

The dreams we loved in early life  
May melt like mist away;  
High thoughts may seem, 'mid passion's strife,  
Like Carthage in decay;

And proud hopes in the human heart  
May be to ruin hurled,  
Like mouldering monuments of art  
Heaped on a sleeping world;

Yet there is something will not die  
Where life hath once been fair;  
Some towering thoughts still rear on high,  
Some Roman lingers there.

Mrs. Child, casually observed, has nothing particularly striking in personal appearance. One would pass her in the street a dozen times without notice. She is low in stature and slightly framed. Her complexion is florid; eyes and hair are dark; features in general diminutive. The expression of her countenance, when animated, is highly intellectual. Her dress is usually plain, not even neat, anything but fashionable. Her bearing needs excitement to impress it with life and dignity. She is of that order of beings who are themselves only on "great occasions." Her husband is still living. She has no children. I need scarcely add

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that she has always been distinguished for her energetic and active philanthropy.

THOMAS DUNN BROWN<sup>1</sup>

I have seen one or two scraps of verse with this gentleman's *nom de plume* appended, which had considerable merit. For example:

A sound melodious shook the breeze  
When thy belovèd name was heard:  
Such was the music in the word,  
Its dainty rhythm the pulses stirred,  
But passed forever joys like these.  
There is no joy, no light, no day,  
But black despair and night alway  
And thickening gloom:  
And this, Azthene, is my doom.

Was it for this, for weary years,  
I strove among the sons of men,  
And by the magic of my pen—  
Just sorcery—walked the lion's den  
Of slander void of tears and fears—  
And all for thee? For thee!—alas,  
As is the image on a glass  
So baseless seems,  
Azthene, all my early dreams.

I must confess, however, that I do not appreciate the “dainty rhythm” of such a word as “Azthene,” and, perhaps, there is some taint of egotism in the pas-

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Dunn English.

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sage about "the magic" of Mr. Brown's pen. Let us be charitable, however, and set all this down under the head of the pure imagination or invention, the first of poetical requisites. The inexcusable sin of Mr. Brown is imitation, if this be not too mild a term. When Barry Cornwall, for example, sings about a "dainty rhythm," Mr. Brown forthwith, in B flat, hoots about it too. He has taken, however, his most unwarrantable liberties in the way of plagiarism with Mr. Henry B. Hirst, of Philadelphia, a poet whose merits have not yet been properly estimated.

I place Mr. Brown, to be sure, on my list of literary people not on account of his poetry (which I presume he himself is not weak enough to estimate very highly), but on the score of his having edited, for several months, "with the aid of numerous collaborators," a magazine called *The Aristidean*. This work, although professedly a "monthly," was issued at irregular intervals, and was unfortunate, I fear, in not attaining at any period more than about fifty subscribers.

Mr. Brown has at least that amount of talent which would enable him to succeed in his father's profession, that of a ferryman on the Schuylkill, but the fate of *The Aristidean* should indicate to him that, to prosper in any higher walk of life, he must apply himself to study. No spectacle can be more ludicrous than that of a man without the commonest school education busying himself in attempts to instruct mankind on topics of polite

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literature. The absurdity, in such cases, does not lie merely in the ignorance displayed by the would-be instructor, but in the transparency of the shifts by which he endeavors to keep this ignorance concealed. The editor of *The Aristidean*, for example, was not the public laughing-stock throughout the five months of his magazine's existence, so much on account of writing "lay" for "lie," "went" for "gone," "set" for "sit," etc., etc., or for coupling nouns in the plural with verbs in the singular, as when he writes, above,

so baseless *seems*  
Azthene, all my earthly *dreams*—

he was not, I say, laughed at so much on account of his excusable deficiencies in English grammar, although an editor should undoubtedly be able to write his own name, as on account of the pertinacity with which he exposed his weakness, in lamenting the "typographical blunders" which so unluckily would creep into his work. He should have reflected that there is not in all America a proof-reader so blind as to permit such errors to escape him. The rhyme, for instance, in the matter of the "dreams" that "seems," would have distinctly shown even the most uneducated printer's devil that he, the devil, had no right to meddle with so obviously an intentional peculiarity.

Were I writing merely for American readers, I should not, of course, have introduced Mr. Brown's

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name in this book. With us, grotesqueries such as *The Aristidean* and its editor are not altogether unparalleled, and are sufficiently well understood; but my purpose is to convey to foreigners some idea of a condition of literary affairs among us, which otherwise they might find it difficult to comprehend or to conceive. That Mr. Brown's blunders are really such as I have described them; that I have not distorted their character or exaggerated their grossness in any respect; that there existed in New York for some months, as conductor of a magazine that called itself "the organ of the Tyler party," and was even mentioned, at times, by respectable papers, a man who obviously never went to school, and was so profoundly ignorant as not to know that he could not spell, are serious and positive facts, uncolored in the slightest degree, demonstrable, in a word, upon the spot, by reference to almost any editorial sentence upon any page of the magazine in question. But a single instance will suffice; Mr. Hirst, in one of his poems has the lines,

O Odin! 't was pleasure—'t was passion to see  
Her serfs sweep like wolves on a lambkin like me.

At page 200 of *The Aristidean* for September, 1845, Mr. Brown, commenting on the English of the passage, says: "This lambkin might have used better language than 'like me,' unless he intended it for a specimen of choice Choctaw, when it may, for all we know to the

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contrary, pass muster." It is needless, I presume, to proceed farther in a search for the most direct proof, possible or conceivable, of the ignorance of Mr. Brown, who, in similar cases, invariably writes, "like I."

In an editorial announcement on page 242 of the same "number," he says: "This and the three succeeding *numbers brings* the work up to January, and with the two *numbers* previously published *makes* up a volume or half year of *numbers.*" But enough of this absurdity; Mr. Brown had, for the motto on his magazine cover, the words of Richelieu:

Men call me cruel;  
I am not:—I am just.

Here the two monosyllables "an ass" should have been appended. They were no doubt omitted through "one of those d——d typographical blunders" which, through life, have been at once the bane and the antidote of Mr. Brown.

I make these remarks in no spirit of unkindness. Mr. B. is yet young, certainly not more than thirty-eight or nine, and might readily improve himself at points where he is most defective. No one of any generosity would think the worse of him for getting private instruction.

I do not personally know him. About his appearance there is nothing very remarkable, except that he



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exists in a perpetual state of vacillation between mustachio and goatee. In character, a *windbeutel*.

### ELIZABETH BOGART

Miss Bogart has been for many years before the public as a writer of poems and tales (principally the former) for the periodicals, having made her *début* as a contributor to the original *New York Mirror*. Dr. Griswold, in a footnote appended to one of her poems quoted in his *Poets and Poetry*, speaks of the "volume" from which he quotes; but Miss Bogart has not yet collected her writings in volume form. Her fugitive pieces have usually been signed "Estelle." They are noticeable for nerve, dignity, and finish. Perhaps the four stanzas entitled *He Came too Late*, and introduced into Dr. Griswold's volume, are the most favorable specimen of her manner. Had he not quoted them I should have copied them here.

Miss Bogart is a member of one of the oldest families in the State. An interesting sketch of her progenitors is to be found in Thompson's *History of Long Island*. She is about the medium height, straight, and slender; black hair and eyes; countenance full of vivacity and intelligence. She converses with fluency and spirit, enunciates distinctly, and exhibits interest in whatever is addressed to her,—a rare quality in good talkers; has a keen appreciation of genius and of natural scenery; is cheerful and fond of society.



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CATHERINE M. SEDGWICK

Miss Sedgwick is not only one of our most celebrated and most meritorious writers, but attained reputation at a period when American reputation in letters was regarded as a phenomenon; and thus, like Irving, Cooper, Paulding, Bryant, Halleck, and one or two others, she is indebted, certainly, for some portion of the esteem in which she was and is held, to that patriotic pride and gratitude to which I have already alluded, and for which we must make reasonable allowance in estimating the absolute merit of our literary pioneers.

Her earliest published work of any length was *A New England Tale*, designed in the first place as a religious tract, but expanding itself into a volume of considerable size. Its success, partially owing, perhaps, to the influence of the parties for whom or at whose instigation it was written, encouraged the author to attempt a novel of somewhat greater elaborateness, as well as length, and *Redwood* was soon announced, establishing her at once as the first female prose writer of her country. It was reprinted in England, and translated, I believe, into French and Italian. *Hope Leslie* next appeared—also a novel—and was more favorably received even than its predecessors. Afterward came *Clarence*, not quite so successful, and then *The Linwoods*, which took rank in the public esteem

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with *Hope Leslie*. These are all of her longer prose fictions, but she has written numerous shorter ones of great merit, such as *The Rich Poor Man and the Poor Rich Man, Live and Let Live* (both in volume form), with various articles for the magazines and annuals, to which she is still an industrious contributor. About ten years since she published a compilation of several of her fugitive prose pieces, under the title *Tales and Sketches*, and a short time ago a series of *Letters from Abroad*, not the least popular or least meritorious of her compositions.

Miss Sedgwick has now and then been nicknamed "the Miss Edgeworth of America"; but she has done nothing to bring down upon her the vengeance of so equivocal a title. That she has thoroughly studied and profoundly admired Miss Edgeworth may, indeed, be gleaned from her works; but what woman has not? Of imitation there is not the slightest perceptible taint. In both authors we observe the same tone of thoughtful morality, but here all resemblance ceases. In the Englishwoman there is far more of a certain Scotch prudence; in the American, more of warmth, tenderness, sympathy for the weaknesses of her sex. Miss Edgeworth is the more acute, the more inventive, and the more rigid; Miss Sedgwick, the more womanly.

All her stories are full of interest. The *New England Tale* and *Hope Leslie* are especially so, but upon the

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whole I am best pleased with *The Linwoods*. Its prevailing features are ease, purity of style, pathos, and verisimilitude. To plot it has little pretension. The scene is in America, and, as the subtitle indicates, "sixty years since." This, by the by, is taken from *Waverley*. The adventures of the family of a Mr. Linwood, a resident of New York, form the principal theme. The character of this gentleman is happily drawn, although there is an antagonism between the initial and concluding touches—the end has forgotten the beginning, like the government of Trinculo. Mr. L. has two children, Herbert and Isabella. Being himself a Tory, the boyish impulses of his son in favor of the Revolutionists are watched with anxiety and vexation; and on the breaking out of the war, Herbert, positively refusing to drink the king's health, is expelled from home by his father, an event on which hinges the main interest of the narrative. Isabella is the heroine proper, full of generous impulses, beautiful, intellectual, *spirituelle*; indeed, a most fascinating creature. But the family of a Widow Lee throws quite a charm over all the book,—a matronly, pious, and devoted mother, yielding up her son to the cause of her country; the son, gallant, chivalrous, yet thoughtful; a daughter, gentle, loving, melancholy, and susceptible of light impressions. This daughter, Bessie Lee, is one of the most effective personations to be found in our fictitious literature, and may lay

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claims to the distinction of originality—no slight distinction where character is concerned. It is the old story, to be sure, of a meek and trusting heart broken by treachery and abandonment, but in the narration of Miss Sedgwick it breaks upon us with all the freshness of novel emotion. Deserted by her lover, an accomplished and aristocratical coxcomb, the spirits of the gentle girl sink gradually from trust to simple hope, from hope to anxiety, from anxiety to doubt, from doubt to melancholy, and from melancholy to madness. The gradation is depicted in a masterly manner. She escapes from her home in New England and endeavors to make her way alone to New York, with the object of restoring to him who had abandoned her some tokens he had given her of his love, an act which her disordered fancy assures her will effect in her own person a disenthralment from passion. Her piety, her madness, and her beauty stand her instead of the lion of Una, and she reaches the city in safety. In that portion of the narrative which embodies this journey are some passages which no mind unimbued with the purest spirit of poetry could have conceived, and they have often made me wonder why Miss Sedgwick has never written a poem.

I have already alluded to her usual excellence of style; but she has a very peculiar fault, that of discrepancy between the words and character of the

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speaker; the fault, indeed, more properly belongs to the depicting of character itself.

For example, at page 38, vol. i., of *The Linwoods* :

“ ‘No more of my contempt for the Yankees, Hal, an thou lovest me,’ replied Jasper. ‘You remember Æsop’s advice to Cræsus at the Persian court?’

“ ‘No, I am sure I do not. You have the most provoking way of resting the lever by which you bring out your own knowledge, on your friend’s ignorance.’ ”

Now all this is pointed (although the last sentence would have been improved by letting the words “on your friend’s ignorance” come immediately after “resting”), but it is by no means the language of schoolboys, and such are the speakers.

Again, at page 226, vol. i., of the same novel :

“ ‘Now, out on you, you lazy, slavish loons!’ cried Rose. ‘Cannot you see these men are raised up to fight for freedom for more than themselves? If the chain be broken at one end, the links will fall apart sooner or later. When you see the sun on the mountain top, you may be sure it will shine into the deepest valleys before long.’ ”

Who would suppose this graceful eloquence to proceed from the mouth of a negro woman? Yet such is Rose.

Again, at page 24, vol. i., same novel :

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“ ‘ True, I never saw her; but I tell you, young lad, that there is such a thing as seeing the shadow of things far distant and past, and never seeing the realities, though they it be that cast the shadows.’ ”

Here the speaker is an old woman who, a few sentences before, has been boasting of her proficiency in “ tellin’ fortins.”

I might object, too, very decidedly to the vulgarity of such a phrase as “ I put in my oar ” (meaning, “ I joined in the conversation ”), when proceeding from the mouth of so well-bred a personage as Miss Isabella Linwood. These are, certainly, most remarkable inadvertences.

As the author of many books, of several absolutely bound volumes in the ordinary “ novel form ” of auld lang syne, Miss Sedgwick has a certain adventitious hold upon the attention of the public, a species of tenure that has nothing to do with literature proper, a very decided advantage, in short, over her more modern rivals whom fashion and the growing influence of the want of an international copyright law have condemned to the external insignificance of the yellow-backed pamphleteering.

We must permit, however, neither this advantage nor the more obvious one of her having been one of our pioneers, to bias the critical judgment as it makes estimate of her abilities in comparison with those of her



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present contemporaries. She has neither the vigor of Mrs. Stephens nor the vivacious grace of Miss Chubbuck, nor the pure style of Mrs. Embury, nor the classic imagination of Mrs. Child, nor the naturalness of Mrs. Annan, nor the thoughtful and suggestive originality of Miss Fuller; but in many of the qualities mentioned she excels, and in no one of them is she particularly deficient. She is an author of marked talent, but by no means of such decided genius as would entitle her to that precedence among our female writers which, under the circumstances to which I have alluded, seems to be yielded her by the voice of the critic.

Strictly speaking, Miss Sedgwick is not one of the *literati* of New York City, but she passes here about half or rather more than half her time. Her home is Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Her family is one of the first in America. Her father, Theodore Sedgwick the elder, was an eminent jurist and descended from one of Cromwell's major-generals. Many of her relatives have distinguished themselves in various ways.

She is about the medium height, perhaps a little below it. Her forehead is an unusually fine one; nose of a slightly Roman curve; eyes dark and piercing; mouth well formed and remarkably pleasant in its expression. The portrait in *Graham's Magazine* is by no means a likeness, and, although the hair is represented as curled (Miss Sedgwick at present wears a



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cap—at least most usually), gives her the air of being much older than she is.

Her manners are those of a high-bred woman, but her ordinary manner vacillates, in a singular way, between cordiality and a reserve amounting to hauteur.

### LEWIS GAYLORD CLARK

Mr. Clark is known principally as the twin brother of the late Willis Gaylord Clark, the poet, of Philadelphia, with whom he has often been confounded from similarity both of person and of name. He is known, also, within a more limited circle, as one of the editors of the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, and it is in this latter capacity that I must be considered as placing him among literary people. He writes little himself, the editorial scraps which usually appear in fine type at the end of the *Knickerbocker* being the joint composition of a great variety of gentlemen (most of them possessing shrewdness and talent) connected with diverse journals about the city of New York. It is only in some such manner, as might be supposed, that so amusing and so heterogeneous a medley of chit-chat could be put together. Were a little more pains taken in elevating the tone of this "Editor's Table," which its best friends are forced to admit is at present a little Boweryish, I should have no hesitation in commending it in general as a very creditable and very entertaining

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specimen of what may be termed easy writing and hard reading.

It is not, of course, to be understood from anything I have here said, that Mr. Clark does not occasionally contribute editorial matter to the magazine. His compositions, however, are far from numerous, and are always to be distinguished by their style, which is more "easily to be imagined than described." It has its merit, beyond doubt, but I shall not undertake to say that either "vigor," "force," or "impressiveness" is the precise term by which that merit should be designated. Mr. Clark once did me the honor to review my poems, and—I forgive him.

The *Knickerbocker* has been long established, and seems to have in it some important elements of success. Its title, for a merely local one, is unquestionably good. Its contributors have usually been men of eminence. Washington Irving was at one period regularly engaged. Paulding, Bryant, Neal, and several others of nearly equal note have also at various times furnished articles, although none of these gentlemen, I believe, continue their communications. In general, the contributed matter has been praiseworthy; the printing, paper, and so forth, have been excellent, and there certainly has been no lack of exertion in the way of what is termed "putting the work before the eye of the public"; still some incomprehensible incubus has seemed always to sit heavily upon it, and it has never

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succeeded in attaining position among intelligent or educated readers. On account of the manner in which it is necessarily edited, the work is deficient in that absolutely indispensable element, individuality. As the editor has no precise character, the magazine, as a matter of course, can have none. When I say "no precise character," I mean that Mr. C., as a literary man, has about him no determinateness, no distinctiveness, no saliency of point; an apple, in fact, or a pumpkin, has more angles. He is as smooth as oil or a sermon from Dr. Hawks; he is noticeable for nothing in the world except for the markedness by which he is noticeable for nothing.

What is the precise circulation of the *Knickerbocker* at present I am unable to say; it has been variously stated at from eight to eighteen hundred subscribers. The former estimate is no doubt too low, and the latter, I presume, is far too high. There are, perhaps, some fifteen hundred copies printed.

At the period of his brother's decease, Mr. Lewis G. Clark bore to him a striking resemblance, but within the last year or two there has been much alteration in the person of the editor of the *Knickerbocker*. He is now, perhaps, forty-two or three, but still good-looking. His forehead is, phrenologically, bad—round, and what is termed "bullety." The mouth, however, is much better, although the smile is too constant and lacks expression; the teeth are white and regular. His hair

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and whiskers are dark, the latter meeting voluminously beneath the chin. In height Mr. C. is about five feet ten or eleven, and in the street might be regarded as quite a "personable man"; in society I have never had the pleasure of meeting him. He is married, I believe.

### ANNE C. LYNCH

Miss Anne Charlotte Lynch has written little; her compositions are even too few to be collected in volume form. Her prose has been, for the most part, anonymous: critical papers in the *New York Mirror* and elsewhere, with unacknowledged contributions to the annuals, especially *The Gift* and *The Diadem*, both of Philadelphia. Her *Diary of a Recluse*, published in the former work, is, perhaps, the best specimen of her prose manner and ability. I remember, also, a fair critique on Fanny Kemble's poems; this appeared in the *Democratic Review*.

In poetry, however, she has done better, and given evidence of at least unusual talent. Some of her compositions in this way are of merit, and one or two of excellence. In the former class I place her *Bones in the Desert*, published in *The Opal* for 1846, her *Farewell to Ole Bull*, first printed in the *Tribune*, and one or two of her sonnets, not forgetting some graceful and touching lines on the death of Mrs. Willis. In the latter class I place two noble poems, *The Ideal* and *The*

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*Ideal Found.* These should be considered as one, for each is by itself imperfect. In modulation and vigor of rhythm, in dignity and elevation of sentiment, in metaphorical appositeness and accuracy, and in energy of expression, I really do not know where to point out anything American much superior to them. Their ideality is not so manifest as their passion, but I think it an unusual indication of taste in Miss Lynch, or (more strictly) of an intuitive sense of poetry's true nature, that this passion is just sufficiently subdued to lie within the compass of the poetic art, within the limits of the beautiful. A step farther and it might have passed them. Mere passion, however exciting, prosaically excites; it is in its very essence homely, and delights in homeliness; but the triumph over passion, as so finely depicted in the two poems mentioned, is one of the purest and most idealizing manifestations of moral beauty.

In character Miss Lynch is enthusiastic, chivalric, self-sacrificing, "equal to any fate," capable of even martyrdom in whatever should seem to her a holy cause, a most exemplary daughter. She has her hobbies, however (of which a very indefinite idea of "duty" is one), and is, of course, readily imposed upon by any artful person who perceives and takes advantage of this most amiable failing.

In person she is rather above the usual height, somewhat slender, with dark hair and eyes, the whole

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countenance at times full of intelligent expression. Her demeanor is dignified, graceful, and noticeable for repose. She goes much into literary society.

### CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN

Mr. Charles Fenno Hoffman has been long known to the public as an author. He commenced his literary career (as is usually the case in America) by writing for the newspapers, for *The New York American* especially, in the editorial conduct of which he became in some manner associated, at a very early age, with Mr. Charles King. His first book, I believe, was a collection (entitled *A Winter in the West*) of letters published in the *American* during a tour made by their author through the "far West." This work appeared in 1834, went through several editions, was reprinted in London, was very popular, and deserved its popularity. It conveys the natural enthusiasm of a true idealist, in the proper phrenological sense, of one sensitively alive to beauty in every development. Its scenic descriptions are vivid, because fresh, genuine, unforced. There is nothing of the cant of the tourist for the sake not of nature but of tourism. The author writes what he feels, and, clearly, because he feels it. The style, as well as that of all Mr. Hoffman's books, is easy, free from superfluities, and, although abundant in broad phrases, still singularly refined, gentlemanly.



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This ability to speak boldly without blackguardism, to use the tools of the rabble when necessary without soiling or roughening the hands with their employment, is a rare and unerring test of the natural in contradistinction from the artificial aristocrat.

Mr. H.'s next work was *Wild Scenes in the Forest and Prairie*, very similar to the preceding, but more diversified with anecdote and interspersed with poetry. *Greyslaer* followed, a romance based on the well-known murder of Sharp, the Solicitor-General of Kentucky, by Beauchampe. W. Gilmore Simms, who has far more power, more passion, more movement, more skill than Mr. Hoffman, has treated the same subject more effectively in his novel *Beauchampe*; but the fact is that both gentlemen have positively failed, as might have been expected. That both books are interesting is no merit either of Mr. H. or of Mr. S. The real events were more impressive than are the fictitious ones. The facts of this remarkable tragedy, as arranged by actual circumstance, would put to shame the skill of the most consummate artist. Nothing was left to the novelist but the amplification of character, and at this point neither the author of *Greyslaer* nor of *Beauchampe* is especially *au fait*. The incidents might be better woven into a tragedy.

In the way of poetry, Mr. Hoffman has also written a good deal. *The Vigil of Faíth and Other Poems* is the title of a volume published several years ago. The

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subject of the leading poem is happy; whether originally conceived by Mr. H. or based on an actual superstition, I cannot say. Two Indian chiefs are rivals in love. The accepted lover is about to be made happy, when his betrothed is murdered by the discarded suitor. The revenge taken is the careful preservation of the life of the assassin, under the idea that the meeting the maiden in another world is the point most desired by both the survivors. The incidents interwoven are picturesque, and there are many quotable passages; the descriptive portions are particularly good; but the author has erred, first, in narrating the story in the first person, and, secondly, in putting into the mouth of the narrator language and sentiments above the nature of an Indian. I say that the narration should not have been in the first person, because, although an Indian may and does fully experience a thousand delicate shades of sentiment (the whole idea of the story is essentially sentimental), still he has, clearly, no capacity for their various expression. Mr. Hoffman's hero is made to discourse very much after the manner of Rousseau. Nevertheless, *The Vigil of Faith* is, upon the whole, one of our most meritorious poems. The shorter pieces in the collection have been more popular; one or two of the songs particularly so, *Sparkling and Bright*, for example, which is admirably adapted to song purposes, and is full of lyric feelings. It cannot be denied, however, that, in general, the whole tone,

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air, and spirit of Mr. Hoffman's fugitive compositions are echoes of Moore. At times the very words and figures of the "British Anacreon" are unconsciously adopted. Neither can there be any doubt that this obvious similarity, if not positive imitation, is the source of the commendation bestowed upon our poet by the *Dublin University Magazine*, which declares him "the best song writer in America," and does him also the honor to intimate its opinion that "he is a better fellow than the whole Yankee crew" of us taken together; after which there is very little to be said.

Whatever may be the merits of Mr. Hoffman as a poet, it may be easily seen that these merits have been put in the worst possible light by the indiscriminate and lavish approbation bestowed on them by Dr. Griswold in his *Poets and Poetry of America*. The editor can find no blemish in Mr. H., agrees with everything, and copies everything said in his praise; worse than all, gives him more space in the book than any two, or perhaps three, of our poets combined. All this is as much an insult to Mr. Hoffman as to the public, and has done the former irreparable injury; how or why, it is, of course, unnecessary to say. "Heaven save us from our friends!"

Mr. Hoffman was the original editor of the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, and gave it while under his control a tone and character, the weight of which may be best estimated by the consideration that the work thence

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received an impetus which has sufficed to bear it on alive, although tottering, month after month, through even that dense region of unmitigated and unmitigable fog, that dreary realm of outer darkness, of utter and inconceivable dunderheadism, over which has so long ruled King Log the Second, in the august person of one Lewis Gaylord Clark. Mr. Hoffman subsequently owned and edited the *American Monthly Magazine*, one of the best journals we have ever had. He also for one year conducted the *New York Mirror*, and has always been a very constant contributor to the periodicals of the day.

He is the brother of Ogden Hoffman. Their father, whose family came to New York from Holland before the time of Peter Stuyvesant, was often brought into connection or rivalry with such men as Pinckney, Hamilton, and Burr.

The character of no man is more universally esteemed and admired than that of the subject of this memoir. He has a host of friends, and it is quite impossible that he should have an enemy in the world. He is chivalric to a fault, enthusiastic, frank without discourtesy, an ardent admirer of the beautiful, a gentleman of the best school,—a gentleman by birth, by education, and by instinct. His manners are graceful and winning in the extreme,—quiet, affable, and dignified, yet cordial and *dégagés*. He converses much, earnestly, accurately, and well. In person he is re-

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markably handsome. He is about five feet ten in height, somewhat stoutly made. His countenance is a noble one, a full index of the character. The features are somewhat massive but regular. The eyes are blue, or light gray, and full of fire; the mouth finely formed, although the lips have a slight expression of voluptuousness; the forehead, to my surprise, although high, gives no indication, in the region of the temples, of that ideality, or love of the beautiful, which is the distinguishing trait of his moral nature. The hair curls, and is of a dark brown, interspersed with gray. He wears full whiskers. Is about forty years of age. Unmarried.

### MARY E. HEWITT

I am not aware that Mrs. Hewitt has written any prose; but her poems have been many, and occasionally excellent. A collection of them was published, in an exquisitely tasteful form, by Ticknor & Co., of Boston. The leading piece, entitled *Songs of Our Land*, although the longest, was by no means the most meritorious. In general, these compositions evince poetic fervor, classicism, and keen appreciation both of moral and physical beauty. No one of them, perhaps, can be judiciously commended as a whole; but no one of them is without merit, and there are several which would do credit to any poet in the land. Still, even

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these latter are particularly rather than generally commendable. They lack unity, totality, ultimate effect, but abound in forcible passages. For example:

Shall I portray thee in thy glorious seeming,  
Thou that the pharos of my darkness art ?

Like the blue lotos on its own clear river  
Lie thy soft eyes, beloved, upon my soul.

And there the slave, a slave no more,  
Hung reverent up the chain he wore.

Here 'mid your wild and dark defile  
O'erawed and wonder-whelmed I stand,  
And ask—" Is this the fearful vale  
That opens on the shadowy land ? "

Oh friends! we would be treasured still,  
Though Time's cold hand should cast  
His misty veil, in after-years,  
Over the idol Past,  
Yet send to us some offering thought  
O'er Memory's ocean wide,  
Pure as the Hindoo's votive lamp  
On Ganga's sacred tide.

Mrs. Hewitt has warm partialities for the sea and all that concerns it. Many of her best poems turn upon sea adventures or have reference to a maritime life. Some portions of her *God Bless the Mariner* are naïve and picturesque; e. g.,



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God bless the happy mariner!  
A homely garb wears he;  
And he goeth with a rolling gait,  
Like a ship before the sea.

He hath piped the loud "Ay, ay, sir!"  
O'er the voices of the main,  
Till his deep tones have the hoarseness  
Of the rising hurricane.

But oh, a spirit looketh  
From out his clear blue eye,  
With a truthful childlike earnestness,  
Like an angel from the sky.

A venturous life the sailor leads  
Between the sky and sea,  
But, when the hour of dread is past,  
A merrier who than he?

The tone of some quatrains entitled *Alone* differs materially from that usual with Mrs. Hewitt. The idea is happy and well managed.

Mrs. Hewitt's sonnets are, upon the whole, her most praiseworthy compositions. One, entitled *Hercules and Omphale*, is noticeable for the vigor of its rhythm:

Reclined, enervate, on the couch of ease,  
No more he pants for deeds of high emprise;  
For Pleasure holds in soft voluptuous ties  
Enthralled, great Jove-descended Hercules.  
The hand that bound the Erymanthean boar,  
Hesperia's dragon slew with bold intent,  
That from his quivering side in triumph rent

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*The skin the Cleonæan lion wore,*  
Holds forth the goblet—while the Lydian queen,  
    Robed like a nymph, her brow enwreathed with vine,  
    Lifts high the amphora brimmed with rosy wine,  
And pours the draught the crownèd cup within.  
And thus the soul, abased to sensual sway,  
Its worth forsakes—its might forgoes for aye.

The unusual force of the line italicized will be observed. This force arises, first, from the directness, or colloquialism without vulgarity, of its expression (the relative pronoun “which” is very happily omitted between “skin” and “the”); and, secondly, to the musical repetition of the vowel in “Cleonæan,” together with the alliterative termination in “Cleonæan” and “lion.” The effect, also, is much aided by the sonorous conclusion “wore.”

Another and better instance of fine versification occurs in *Forgotten Heroes* :

And the peasant mother at her door,  
    To the babe that climbed her knee,  
Sang aloud the land's heroic songs—  
    Sang of Thermopylæ,  
Sang of Mycale, of Marathon,  
    Of proud Platæa's day,  
Till the wakened hills from peak to peak  
    Echoed the glorious lay.  
Oh, godlike name! oh, godlike deed!  
    Song-borne afar on every breeze,  
Ye are sounds to thrill like a battle shout,  
    Leonidas! Miltiades!

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The general intention here is a line of four iambuses alternating with a line of three; but, less through rhythmical skill than a musical ear, the poetess has been led into some exceedingly happy variations of the theme. For example, in place of the ordinary iambus as the first foot of the first, of the second, and of the third line, a bastard iambus has been employed. These lines are thus scanned:

And the peas | ant moth | er at | her door |  
<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>  
 To the babe | that climbed | her knee |  
<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>  
 Sang aloud | the land's | hero | ic songs |  
<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>

The fourth line,

Sang of | Thermo | pylæ,  
<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>

is well varied by a trochee, instead of an iambus, in the first foot; and the variation expresses forcibly the enthusiasm excited by the topic of the supposed songs, "Thermopylæ." The fifth line is scanned as the three first. The sixth is the general intention, and consists simply of iambuses. The seventh is like the three first and the fifth. The eighth is like the fourth; and here again the opening trochee is admirably adapted to the movement of the topic. The ninth is the general intention, and is formed of four iambuses. The tenth is an alternating line and yet has four iambuses, instead

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of the usual three; as has also the final line, an alternating one, too. A fuller volume is in this manner given to the close of the subject; and this volume is fully in keeping with the rising enthusiasm. The last line but one has two bastard iambuses, thus:

Ye are sounds | to thrill | like a bat | the shout | .  
4    4                    2                    4    4                    2

Upon the whole, it may be said that the most skilful versifier could not have written lines better suited to the purposes of the poet. The errors of *Alone*, however, and of Mrs. Hewitt's poems generally, show that we must regard the beauties pointed out above, merely in the light to which I have already alluded; that is to say, as occasional happiness to which the poetess is led by a musical ear.

I should be doing this lady injustice were I not to mention that, at times, she rises into a higher and purer region of poetry than might be supposed, or inferred, from any of the passages which I have hitherto quoted. The conclusion of her *Ocean Tide to the Rivulet* puts me in mind of the rich spirit of Horne's noble epic, *Orion*.

Sadly the flowers their faded petals close  
Where on thy banks they languidly repose,  
Waiting in vain to hear thee onward press;  
And pale Narcissus by thy margin side  
Hath lingered for thy coming, drooped and died,  
Pining for thee amid the loneliness.

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Hasten, beloved!—*here ! 'neath the o'erhanging rock !*

Hark! from the deep, my anxious hope to mock,

*They call me back unto my parent main,*

Brighter than Thetis thou—and *ah, more fleet !*

*I hear the rushing of thy fair white feet !*

Joy! joy!—my breast receives its own again!

The personifications here are well managed. The “Here!—’neath the o’erhanging rock!” has the high merit of being truthfully, by which I mean naturally, expressed, and imparts exceeding vigor to the whole stanza. The idea of the ebb-tide, conveyed in the second line italicized, is one of the happiest imaginable; and too much praise can scarcely be bestowed on the “rushing” of the “fair white feet.” The passage altogether is full of fancy, earnestness, and the truest poetic strength. Mrs. Hewitt has given many such indications of a fire which, with more earnest endeavor, might be readily fanned into flame.

In character, she is sincere, fervent, benevolent; sensitive to praise and to blame; in temperament melancholy; in manner subdued; converses earnestly yet quietly. In person she is tall and slender, with black hair and full gray eyes; complexion dark; general expression of the countenance singularly interesting and agreeable.

RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE

About twelve years ago, I think, the *New York Sun*, a daily paper, price one penny, was established in the

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city of New York by Mr. Moses Y. Beach, who engaged Mr. Richard Adams Locke as its editor. In a well-written prospectus, the object of the journal professed to be that of "supplying the public with the news of the day at so cheap a rate as to lie within the means of all." The consequences of the scheme, in their influence on the whole newspaper business of the country, and, through this business, on the interest of the country at large, are probably beyond all calculation.

Previous to the *Sun*, there had been an unsuccessful attempt at publishing a penny paper in New York, and the *Sun* itself was originally projected and for a short time issued by Messrs. Day & Wisner; its establishment, however, is altogether due to Mr. Beach, who purchased it of its disheartened originators. The first decided movement of the journal, nevertheless, is to be attributed to Mr. Locke; and in so saying, I by no means intend any depreciation of Mr. Beach, since in the engagement of Mr. L. he had but given one of the earliest instances of that unusual sagacity for which I am inclined to yield him credit.

At all events, the *Sun* was revolving in a comparatively narrow orbit when, one fine day, there appeared in its editorial columns a prefatory article announcing very remarkable astronomical discoveries made at the Cape of Good Hope by Sir John Herschel. The information was said to have been received by the *Sun* from an early copy of the *Edinburgh Journal of Sci-*



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ence, in which appeared a communication from Sir John himself. This preparatory announcement took very well (there had been no hoaxes in those days), and was followed by full details of the reputed discoveries, which were now found to have been made chiefly in respect to the moon, and by means of a telescope to which the one lately constructed by the Earl of Rosse is a plaything. As these discoveries were gradually spread before the public, the astonishment of that public grew out of all bounds; but those who questioned the veracity of the *Sun*—the authenticity of the communication to the *Edinburgh Journal of Science*—were really very few indeed; and this I am forced to look upon as a far more wonderful thing than any “man-bat” of them all.

About six months before this occurrence, the Harpers had issued an American edition of Sir John Herschel’s *Treatise on Astronomy*, and I had been much interested in what is there said respecting the possibility of future lunar investigations. The theme excited my fancy, and I longed to give free vein to it in depicting my day dreams about the scenery of the moon; in short, I longed to write a story embodying these dreams. The obvious difficulty, of course, was that of accounting for the narrator’s acquaintance with the satellite; and the equally obvious mode of surmounting the difficulty was the supposition of an extraordinary telescope. I saw at once that the chief interest of such a narrative must depend upon the reader’s yielding his credence in

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some measure as to details of actual fact. At this stage of my deliberations, I spoke of the design to one or two friends, to Mr. John P. Kennedy, the author of *Swallow Barn*, among others; and the result of my conversations with them was that the optical difficulties of constructing such a telescope as I conceived were so rigid and so commonly understood, that it would be in vain to attempt giving due verisimilitude to any fiction having the telescope as a basis. Reluctantly, therefore, and only half convinced (believing the public, in fact, more readily gullible than did my friends), I gave up the idea of imparting very close verisimilitude to what I should write; that is to say, so close as really to deceive. I fell back upon a style half plausible, half bantering, and resolved to give what interest I could to an actual passage from the earth to the moon, describing the lunar scenery as if surveyed and personally examined by the narrator. In this view I wrote a story which I called *Hans Pfaall*, publishing it about six months afterward in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, of which I was then editor.

It was three weeks after the issue of the *Messenger* containing *Hans Pfaall*, that the first of the "Moon-hoax" editorials made its appearance in the *Sun*, and no sooner had I seen the paper than I understood the jest, which not for a moment could I doubt had been suggested by my own *jeu d'esprit*. Some of the New York journals (the *Transcript* among others) saw the matter

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in the same light, and published the "Moon Story" side by side with *Hans Pfaall*, thinking that the author of the one had been detected in the author of the other. Although the details are, with some exception, very dissimilar, still I maintain that the general features of the two compositions are nearly identical. Both are hoaxes, although one is in a tone of mere banter, the other of downright earnest; both hoaxes are on one subject, astronomy; both on the same point of that subject, the moon; both professed to have derived exclusive information from a foreign country; and both attempt to give plausibility by minuteness of scientific detail. Add to all this, that nothing of a similar nature had ever been attempted before these two hoaxes, the one of which followed immediately upon the heels of the other.

Having stated the case, however, in this form, I am bound to do Mr. Locke the justice to say that he denies having seen my article prior to the publication of his own; I am bound to add, also, that I believe him.

Immediately on the completion of the "Moon Story" (it was three or four days in getting finished), I wrote an examination of its claims to credit, showing distinctly its fictitious character, but was astonished at finding that I could obtain few listeners, so really eager were all to be deceived, so magical were the charms of a style that served as the vehicle of an exceedingly clumsy invention.

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It may afford even now some amusement to see pointed out those particulars of the hoax which should have sufficed to establish its real character. Indeed, however rich the imagination displayed in this fiction, it wanted much of the force which might have been given it by a more scrupulous attention to general analogy and to fact. That the public were misled, even for an instant, merely proves the gross ignorance which, ten or twelve years ago, was so prevalent on astronomical topics.

The moon's distance from the earth is, in round numbers, 240,000 miles. If we wish to ascertain how near, apparently, a lens would bring the satellite, or any distant object, we, of course, have but to divide the distance by the magnifying, or, more strictly, by the space-penetrating power of the glass. Mr. Locke gives his lens a power of 42,000 times. By this divide 240,000 (the moon's real distance), and we have five miles and five sevenths as the apparent distance. No animal could be seen so far, much less the minute points particularized in the story. Mr. L. speaks about Sir John Herschel's perceiving flowers (the *Papaver rhoeas*, etc.), and even detecting the color and the shape of the eye of small birds. Shortly before, too, the author himself observes that the lens would not render perceptible objects less than eighteen inches in diameter; but even this, as I have said, is giving the glass far too great a power.

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On page 18 (of the pamphlet edition), speaking of "a hairy veil" over the eyes of a species of bison, Mr. L. says: "It immediately occurred to the acute mind of Doctor Herschel that this was a providential contrivance to protect the eyes of the animal from the great extremes of light and darkness to which all the inhabitants of our side of the moon are periodically subjected." But this should not be thought a very "acute" observation of the Doctor's. The inhabitants of our side of the moon have, evidently, no darkness at all; in the absence of the sun they have a light from the earth equal to that of thirteen full moons, so that there can be nothing of the extremes mentioned.

The topography throughout, even when professing to accord with Blunt's Lunar Chart, is at variance with that and all other lunar charts, and even at variance with itself. The points of the compass, too, are in sad confusion; the writer seeming to be unaware that, on a lunar map, these are not in accordance with terrestrial points, the east being to the left, and so forth.

Deceived, perhaps, by the vague titles *Mare Nubium*, *Mare Tranquillitatis*, *Mare Fœcunditatis*, etc., given by astronomers of former times to the dark patches on the moon's surface, Mr. L. has long details respecting oceans and other large bodies of water in the moon; whereas there is no astronomical point more positively ascertained than that no such bodies exist there. In examining the boundary between light and darkness in



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a crescent or gibbous moon, where this boundary crosses any of the dark places, the line of division is found to be jagged; but were these dark places liquid, they would evidently be even.

The description of the wings of the man-bat (on page 21) is but a literal copy of Peter Wilkins' account of the wings of his flying islanders. This simple fact should at least have induced suspicion.

On page 23 we read thus: "What a prodigious influence must our thirteen times larger globe have exercised upon this satellite when an embryo in the womb of time, the passive subject of chemical affinity!" Now, this is very fine; but it should be observed that no astronomer could have made such remark, especially to any *Journal of Science*, for the earth in the sense intended (that of bulk) is not only thirteen but forty-nine times larger than the moon. A similar objection applies to the five or six concluding pages of the pamphlet, where, by way of introduction to some discoveries in Saturn, the philosophical correspondent is made to give a minute schoolboy account of that planet,—an account quite supererogatory, it might be presumed, in the case of the *Edinburgh Journal of Science*.

But there is one point, in especial, which should have instantly betrayed the fiction. Let us imagine the power really possessed of seeing animals on the moon's surface; what, in such case, would first arrest



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the attention of an observer from the earth? Certainly neither the shape, size, nor any other peculiarity in these animals so soon as their remarkable position: they would seem to be walking heels up and head down, after the fashion of flies on a ceiling. The real observer, however prepared by previous knowledge, would have commented on this odd phenomenon before proceeding to other details; the fictitious observer has not even alluded to the subject, but, in the case of the man-bats, speaks of seeing their entire bodies, when it is demonstrable that he could have seen little more than the apparently flat hemisphere of the head.

I may as well observe, in conclusion, that the size, and especially the powers of the man-bats (for example, their ability to fly in so rare an atmosphere, if, indeed, the moon has any), with most of the other fancies in regard to animal and vegetable existence, are at variance generally with all analogical reasoning on these themes, and that analogy here will often amount to the most positive demonstration. The temperature of the moon, for instance, is rather above that of boiling water, and Mr. Locke, consequently, has committed a serious oversight in not representing his man-bats, his bisons, his game of all kinds—to say nothing of his vegetables—as each and all done to a turn.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to add, that all the

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suggestions attributed to Brewster and Herschel in the beginning of the hoax, about the "transfusion of artificial light through the focal object of vision," etc., belong to that species of figurative writing which comes most properly under the head of rigmarole. There is a real and very definite limit to optical discovery among the stars, a limit whose nature need only be stated to be understood. If, indeed, the casting of large lenses were all that is required, the ingenuity of man would ultimately prove equal to the task, and we might have them of any size demanded<sup>1</sup>; but, unhappily, in proportion to the increase of size in the lens, and consequently of space-penetrating power, is the diminution of light from the object by diffusion of the rays. And for this evil there is no remedy within human reach; for an object is seen by means of that light alone, whether direct or reflected, which proceeds from the object itself. Thus the only artificial light which could avail Mr. Locke would be such as he should be able to throw, not upon "the focal object of vision," but upon the moon. It has been easily calculated that when the light proceeding from a heavenly body becomes so diffused as to be as weak as the natural light given out by the stars collectively in a clear, moonless night,

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<sup>1</sup> Neither of the Herschels dreamed of the possibility of a speculum six feet in diameter, and now the marvel has been triumphantly accomplished by Lord Rosse. There is, in fact, no physical impossibility in our casting lenses of even fifty feet diameter or more. A sufficiency of means and skill is all that is demanded.

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then the heavenly body for any practical purpose is no longer visible.

The singular blunders to which I have referred being properly understood, we shall have all the better reason for wonder at the prodigious success of the hoax. Not one person in ten discredited it, and (strangest point of all!) the doubters were chiefly those who doubted without being able to say why—the ignorant, those uninformed in astronomy, people who would not believe because the thing was so novel, so entirely “out of the usual way.” A grave professor of mathematics in a Virginian college told me seriously that he had no doubt of the truth of the whole affair! The great effect wrought upon the public mind is referable, first, to the novelty of the idea; secondly, to the fancy-exciting and reason-repressing character of the alleged discoveries; thirdly, to the consummate tact with which the deception was brought forth; fourthly, to the exquisite *vraisemblance* of the narration. The hoax was circulated to an immense extent; was translated into various languages; was even made the subject of (quizzical) discussion in astronomical societies; drew down upon itself the grave denunciation of Dick; and was, upon the whole, decidedly the greatest hit in the way of sensation—of merely popular sensation—ever made by any similar fiction either in America or in Europe.

Having read the “Moon Story” to an end, and found it anticipative of all the main points of my *Hans Pfaall*,

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I suffered the latter to remain unfinished. The chief design in carrying my hero to the moon was to afford him an opportunity of describing the lunar scenery, but I found that he could add very little to the minute and authentic account of Sir John Herschel. The first part of *Hans Pfaall*, occupying about eighteen pages of the *Messenger*, embraced merely a journal of the passage between the two orbs, and a few words of general observation on the most obvious features of the satellite; the second part will most probably never appear. I did not think it advisable even to bring my voyager back to his parent earth. He remains where I left him, and is still, I believe, "the man in the moon."

From the epoch of the hoax the *Sun* shone with unmitigated splendor. The start thus given the paper insured it a triumph; it has now a daily circulation of not far from fifty thousand copies, and is, therefore, probably, the most really influential journal of its kind in the world. Its success firmly established "the penny system," throughout the country, and through the *Sun*, consequently, we are indebted to the genius of Mr. Locke for one of the most important steps ever yet taken in the pathway of human progress.

On dissolving, about a year afterward, his connection with Mr. Beach, Mr. Locke established a political daily paper, the *New Era*, conducting it with distinguished ability. In this journal he made, very unwisely, an attempt at a second hoax, giving the *finale*

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of the adventures of Mungo Park in Africa, the writer pretending to have come into possession, by some accident, of the lost MSS. of the traveller. No one, however, seemed to be deceived (Mr. Locke's columns were a suspected district), and the adventures were never brought to an end. They were richly imaginative.

The next point made by their author was the getting up a book on magnetism as the *primum mobile* of the universe, in connection with Dr. Sherwood, the practitioner of magnetic remedies. The more immediate purpose of the treatise was the setting forth a new magnetic method of obtaining the longitude. The matter was brought before Congress and received with favorable attention. What definite action was had I know not. A review of the work appeared in the *Army and Navy Chronicle*, and made sad havoc of the whole project. It was enabled to do this, however, by attacking in detail the accuracy of some calculations of no very radical importance. These and others Mr. Locke is now engaged in carefully revising; and my own opinion is that his theory (which he has reached more by dint of imagination than of anything else) will finally be established, although, perhaps, never thoroughly by him.

His prose style is noticeable for its concision, luminousness, completeness,—each quality in its proper place. He has that method so generally characteristic of genius proper. Everything he writes is a model in



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its peculiar way, serving just the purposes intended and nothing to spare. He has written some poetry, which, through certain radical misapprehensions, is not very good.

Like most men of true imagination, Mr. Locke is a seemingly paradoxical compound of coolness and excitability.

He is about five feet seven inches in height, symmetrically formed; there is an air of distinction about his whole person, the *air noble* of genius. His face is strongly pitted by the smallpox, and, perhaps from the same cause, there is a marked obliquity in the eyes; a certain calm, clear luminousness, however, about these latter, amply compensates for the defect, and the forehead is truly beautiful in its intellectuality. I am acquainted with no person possessing so fine a forehead as Mr. Locke. He is married, and about forty-five years of age, although no one would suppose him to be more than thirty-eight. He is a lineal descendant from the immortal author of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*.







## Estelle Anna Lewis

**T**HE maiden name of Mrs. Lewis was Robinson. She is a native of Baltimore. Her family is one of the best in America. Her father was a distinguished Cuban of English and Spanish parentage, wealthy, influential, and of highly cultivated mind; from him, perhaps, Mrs. Lewis has inherited the melancholy temperament which so obviously predominates in her writings. Between the death of her father and her present comfortable circumstances, she has undergone many romantic and striking vicissitudes of fortune, which, of course, have not failed to enlarge her knowledge of human nature, and to develop the poetical germ which became manifest in her earliest infancy.

Mrs. Lewis is, perhaps, the best educated, if not the most accomplished of American authoresses, using the word "accomplished" in the ordinary acceptation

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of that term. She is not only cultivated as respects the usual ornamental acquirements of her sex, but excels as a modern linguist, and very especially as a classical scholar; while her scientific acquisitions are of no common order. Her occasional translations from the more difficult portions of Virgil have been pronounced, by our first professors, the best of the kind yet accomplished—a commendation which only a thorough classicist can appreciate in its full extent. Her rudimental education was received, in part, at Mrs. Willard's celebrated Academy at Troy; but she is an incessant and very ambitious student, and, in this sense, the more important part of her education may be said to have been self-attained.

In character, Mrs. Lewis is everything which can be thought desirable in woman—generous, sensitive, impulsive, enthusiastic in her admiration of beauty and virtue, but ardent in her scorn of wrong. The predominant trait of her disposition, as before hinted, is a certain romantic sensibility, bordering upon melancholy, or even gloom. In person, she is distinguished by the grace and dignity of her form, and the nobility of her manner. She has auburn hair, naturally curling, and expressive eyes of dark hazel. Her portrait, by Elliot, which has attracted much attention, is most assuredly no flattering likeness, although admirable as a work of art, and conveying a forcible idea of its accomplished original, so far as regards the *tout ensemble*.

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At an early age Miss Robinson was allied in marriage to Mr. S. D. Lewis, attorney and counsellor at law; and soon afterward they took up their residence in Brooklyn, where they have ever since continued to reside, Mr. Lewis absorbed in the labors of his profession, as she in the pleasurable occupations connected with literature and art.

Her earliest efforts were made in the *Family Magazine*, edited by the well-known Solomon Southwick, of Albany. Subsequently she wrote much for various periodicals, in chief part for the *Democratic Review*; but her first appearance before the public in volume form, was in the *Records of the Heart*, issued by the Appletons in 1844. The leading poems in this are "Florence," "Zenel," "Melpomene," "Laone," "The Last Hour of Sappho," and "The Bride of Guayaquil," all long and finished compositions. *Florence* is, perhaps, the best of the series, upon the whole; although all breathe the true poetical spirit. It is a tale of passion and wild romance; vivid, forcible, and artistical. But a faint idea, of course, can be given of such a poem by an extract; but we cannot refrain from quoting two brief passages as characteristic of the general manner and tone:

Morn is abroad; the sun is up;  
The dew fills high each lily's cup;  
Ten thousand flowerets springing there  
Diffuse their incense through the air,

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And smiling hail the morning beam:  
The fawns plunge panting in the stream,  
Or through the vale with light foot spring;  
Insect and bird are on the wing,  
And all is bright, as when in May  
Young Nature holds a holiday.

Again:

The waves are smooth, the wind is calm;  
Onward the golden stream is gliding  
Amid the myrtle and the palm  
And ilices its margin hiding.  
Now sweeps it o'er the jutting shoals  
In murmurs, like despairing souls,  
Now deeply, softly, flows along,  
Like ancient minstrel's warbling song;  
Then slowly, darkly, thoughtfully,  
Loses itself in the mighty sea.

Among the minor poems in this collection is *The Forsaken*, so widely known and so universally admired. The popular as well as the critical voice ranks it as the most beautiful ballad of its kind ever written.

We have read this little poem more than twenty times and always with increasing admiration. It is inexpressibly beautiful. No one of real feeling can peruse it without a strong inclination to tears. Its irresistible charm is its absolute truth, the unaffected naturalness of its thought. The sentiment which forms the basis

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of the composition is, perhaps, at once the most universal and the most passionate of sentiments. No human being exists, over the age of fifteen, who has not, in his heart of hearts, a ready echo for all there so pathetically expressed. The essential poetry of the ideas would only be impaired by "foreign ornament." This is a case in which we should be repelled by the mere conventionalities of the Muse. We demand, for such thoughts, the most rigorous simplicity at all points. It will be observed that, strictly speaking, there is not an attempt at "imagery" in the whole poem. All is direct, terse, penetrating. In a word, nothing could be better done. The versification, while in full keeping with the general character of simplicity, has, in certain passages, a vigorous, trenchant euphony which would confer honor on the most accomplished masters of the art. We refer especially to the lines,

And follow me to my long home  
Solemn and slow.

And the quatrain:

Could I but know when I am sleeping  
*Low in the ground,*  
One faithful heart would there be keeping  
*Watch all night round.*

The initial trochee here, in each instance, substituted for the iambus, produces, so naturally as to seem acci-



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dental, a very effective echo of sound to sense. The thought included in the line "And light the tomb," should be dwelt upon to be appreciated in its full extent of beauty; and the verses which I have italicized in the last stanza, are poetry, poetry in the purest sense of that much-misused word. They have power, indisputable power, making us thrill with a sense of their weird magnificence as we read them.

After the publication of the *Records*, Mrs. Lewis contributed more continuously to the periodicals of the day, her writings appearing chiefly in the *American Review*, and the *Democratic Review*, and *Graham's Magazine*. In the autumn of 1848, Mr. G. P. Putnam published, in exquisite style, her *Child of the Sea, and Other Poems*, a volume which at once placed its fair authoress in the first rank of American authors. The composition which gives title to this collection is a tale of sea-adventure,—of crime, passion, love, and revenge,—resembling, in all the noble poetic elements, the *Corsair* of Lord Byron, from which, however, it widely differs in plot, conduct, manner, and expression. The opening lines not only give a general summary of the design, but serve well to exemplify the ruling merits of the composition:

Where blooms the myrtle and the olive flings  
Its aromatic breath upon the air;  
Where the sad bird of Night forever sings  
Meet anthems for the children of Despair,



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Who, silently, with wild dishevelled hair,  
Stray through those valleys of perpetual bloom;  
Where hideous War and Murder from their lair  
Stalk forth in awful and terrific gloom,  
Rapine and Vice disport on Glory's gilded tomb:

My fancy pictures youthful Love,  
Ill-starred yet trustful, truthful and sublime  
As ever angels chronicled above:  
The sorrowings of Beauty in her prime;  
Virtue's reward; the punishment of Crime;  
The dark, inscrutable decrees of Fate;  
Despair untold before in prose or rhyme;  
The wrong, the agony, the sleepless hate  
That mad the soul and make the bosom desolate.

One of the most distinguishing merits of *The Child of the Sea*, is the admirable conduct of its narrative, in which every incident has its proper position, where nothing is inconsequent or incoherent, and where, above all, the rich and vivid interest is never, for a single moment, permitted to flag. How few, even of the most accomplished and skilful of poets, are successful in the management of a story, when that story has to be told in verse. The difficulty is easily analyzed. In all mere narrations there are particulars of the dull-est prose, which are inevitable and indispensable, but which serve no other purpose than to bind together the true interest of the incidents; in a word, explanatory passages, which are yet to be "so done into verse" as



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not to let down the imagination from its pride of place. Absolutely to poetize these explanatory passages is beyond the reach of art, for prose, and that of the flattest kind, is their essentiality; but the skill of the artist should be sufficient to gloss them over so as to seem poetry amid the poetry by which they are surrounded. For this end a very consummate art is demanded. Here the tricks of phraseology, quaintnesses, and rhythmical effects come opportunely into play. Of the species of skill required, Moore, in his *Alcíphron*, has given us, upon the whole, the happiest exemplification; but Mrs. Lewis has very admirably succeeded in her *Child of the Sea*. I am strongly tempted, by way of showing what I mean, to give here a digest of her narrative, with comments; but this would be doing the author an injustice, in anticipating the interest of her work.

The poem, although widely differing in subject from any of Mrs. Lewis's prior compositions, and far superior to any of them in general vigor, artistic skill, and assured certainty of purpose, is nevertheless easily recognizable as the production of the same mind which originated *Florence* and *The Forsaken*. We perceive, throughout, the same passion, the same enthusiasm, and the same seemingly reckless abandon of thought and manner which I have already mentioned as characterizing the writer. I should have spoken also, of a fastidious yet most sensitive and almost voluptuous



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sense of beauty. These are the general traits of *The Child of the Sea*, but undoubtedly the chief value of the poem, to ordinary readers, will be found to lie in the aggregation of its imaginative passages, its quotable points. I give a few of these at random; the description of sunset upon the Bay of Gibraltar will compare favorably with anything of a similar character ever written :

Fresh blows the breeze on Tarick's burnished bay;  
The silent sea-mews bend them through the spray:

The beauty-freighted barges bound afar  
To the soft music of the gay guitar.

I quote further :

The oblivious world of sleep—  
That rayless realm where Fancy never beams—  
That Nothingness beyond the Land of Dreams.

Folded his arms across his sable vest,  
As if to keep the heart within his breast.  
. . . he lingers by the streams,  
Pondering on incommunicable themes.

Nor notes the fawn that tamely by him glides.  
The violets lifted up their azure eyes  
Like timid virgins whom Love's steps surprise.

And all is hushed—so still—so silent there  
That one might hear an angel wing the air.

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Adown the groves and dewy vales afar  
Tinkles the serenader's soft guitar.

Her tender cares,  
Her solemn sighs, her silent streaming tears,  
Her more than woman's soft solicitude  
To soothe his spirit in its frantic mood.

Now by the crags—then by each pendant bough  
Steadies his steps adown the mountain's brow.

Sinks on his crimson couch, so long unsought,  
And floats along the phantom stream of thought.

Ah no! for there are times when the sick soul  
Lies calm amid the storms that round it roll,  
Indifferent to Fate or to what haven  
By the terrific tempest it is driven.

The dahlias, leaning from the golden vase,  
Peer pensively upon her pallid face,  
While the sweet songster o'er the oaken door  
Looks through his grate and warbles " Weep no more! "

Lovely in her misery.  
As jewel sparkling up through the dark sea.  
Where hung the fiery moon and stars of blood,  
And phantom ships rolled on the rolling flood.

My mind by grief was ripened ere its time,  
And knowledge came spontaneous as a chime  
That flows into the soul, unbid, unsought;  
On Earth and Air and Heaven I fed my thought,  
On Ocean's teaching's, Ætna's lava tears,  
Ruins and wrecks and nameless sepulchres.

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Each morning brought to them untasted bliss.  
No pangs, no sorrows came with varying years,  
No cold distrust, no faithlessness, no tears—.

But hand in hand as Eve and Adam trod  
Eden, they walked beneath the smile of God.

It will be understood, of course, that we quote these brief passages by no means as the best, or even as particularly excelling the rest of the poem, on an average estimate of merit, but simply with a view of exemplifying some of the author's more obvious traits,—those, especially, of vigorous rhythm and forcible expression. In no case can the loftier qualities of a truly great poem be conveyed through the citation of its component portions, in detail, even when long extracts are given; how much less, then, by such mere points as we have selected.

*The Broken Heart* (included with *The Child of the Sea*) is even more characteristic of Mrs. Lewis than that very remarkable poem. It is more enthusiastic, more glowing, more passionate, and perhaps more abundant in that peculiar spirit of abandon which has rendered Mrs. Maria Brooks's *Zophiel* so great a favorite with the critics. *The Child of the Sea* is, of course, by far the more elaborate and more artistic composition, and excels *The Broken Heart* in most of those high qualities which immortalize a work of art. Its narrative, also, is more ably conducted and more replete

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with incident; but to the delicate fancy or the bold imagination of a poet, there is an inexpressible charm in the latter.

The minor poems embraced in the volume published by Mr. Putnam evince a very decided advance in skill made by their author since the issue of the *Records of the Heart*. A nobler poem than the *La Vega* could not be easily pointed out. Its fierce energy of expression will arrest attention very especially; but its general glow and vigor have rarely been equalled.

Among the author's less elaborate compositions, however, *The Angel's Visit*, written since the publication of her *Child of the Sea*, is, perhaps, upon the whole, the best; although *The Forsaken* and *La Vega* are scarcely, if at all, inferior.

In summing up the authorial merits of Mrs. Lewis, all critical opinion must agree in assigning her a high, if not the very highest rank among the poetesses of her land. Her artistic ability is unusual; her command of language great; her acquirements numerous and thorough; her range of incident wide; her invention, generally, vigorous; her fancy exuberant; and her imagination—that primary and most indispensable of all poetic requisites—richer, perhaps, than any of her female contemporaries. But as yet, her friends sincerely believe, she has given merely an earnest of her powers.



## James Russell Lowell<sup>1</sup>

**W**HAT have we Americans accomplished in the way of satire? *The Vision of Rubeta*, by Laughton Osborn, is probably our best composition of the kind; but, in saying this, we intend no excessive commendation. Trumbull's clumsy and imitative work is scarcely worth mention; and then we have Halleck's *Croakers*, local and ephemeral; but what is there besides? Park Benjamin has written a clever address, with the title *Infatuation*, and Holmes has an occasional scrap, piquant enough in its way; but we can think of nothing more that can be fairly called "satire." Some matters we have produced, to be sure, which were excellent in the way of burlesque (the Poems of William Ellery Channing, for example), without meaning a syllable that was not utterly solemn and serious. Odes, ballads, songs, sonnets, epics, and epigrams, possessed of this unintentional excellence, we should have no difficulty in designating by the

<sup>1</sup> *A Fable for the Critics*. New York: George P. Putnam.



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dozen; but in the particular of direct and obvious satire, it cannot be denied that we are unaccountably deficient.

It has been suggested that this deficiency arises from the want of a suitable field for satirical display. In England, it is said, satire abounds because the people there find a proper target in the aristocracy, whom they (the people) regard as a distinct race with whom they have little in common, relishing even the most virulent abuse of the upper classes with a gusto undiminished by any feeling that they (the people) have any concern in it. In Russia, or Austria, on the other hand, it is urged, satire is unknown, because there is danger in touching the aristocracy, and self-satire would be odious to the mass. In America, also, the people who write are, it is maintained, the people who read; thus in satirizing the people we satirize only ourselves, and are never in condition to sympathize with the satire.

All this is more verisimilar than true. It is forgotten that no individual considers himself as one of the mass. Each person, in his own estimate, is the pivot on which all the rest of the world spins round. We may abuse the people by wholesale, and yet with a clear conscience, so far as regards any compunction for offending any one from among the multitude of which that "people" is composed. Every one of the crowd will cry, "Encore! give it to them, the vagabonds! it serves them right." It seems to us that, in America, we have re-





James Russell Lowell.  
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W. Page.

H. B. Hall



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fused to encourage satire, not because what we have had touches us too nearly, but because it has been too pointless to touch us at all. Its namby-pambyism has arisen, in part, from the general want, among our men of letters, of that minute polish, of that skill in details, which, in combination with natural sarcastic power, satire, more than any other form of literature, so imperatively demands. In part, also, we may attribute our failure to the colonial sin of imitation. We content ourselves at this point not less supinely than at all others, with doing what not only has been done before, but what, however well done, has yet been done *ad nauseam*. We should not be able to endure infinite repetitions of even absolute excellence; but what is *McFingal* more than a faint echo from *Hudibras*? and what is *The Vision of Rubeta* more than a vast gilded swill-trough overflowing with *Dunciad* and water? Although we are not all Archilochuses, however; although we have few pretensions to the ἡχεῖν τε καὶ ἰάμβους; although, in short, we are no satirists ourselves, there can be no question that we answer sufficiently well as subjects for satire.

*The Vision* is bold enough, if we leave out of sight its anonymous issue; and bitter enough and witty enough, if we forget its pitiable punning on names; and long enough (Heaven knows!), and well constructed and decently versified; but it fails in the principal element of all satire,—sarcasm,—because the intention to be sar-



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castic (as in the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and in all the more classical satires) is permitted to render itself manifest. The malevolence appears. The author is never very severe, because he is at no time particularly cool. We laugh not so much at his victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. And where a deeper sentiment than mirth is excited, where it is pity or contempt that we are made to feel, the feeling is too often reflected, in its object, from the satirized to the satirist, with whom we sympathize in the discomfort of his animosity. Mr. Osborn has not many superiors in downright invective; but this is the awkward left arm of the satiric Muse. That satire alone is worth talking about which at least appears to be the genial, good-humored outpouring of irrepressible merriment.

The *Fable for the Critics*, just issued, has not the name of its author on the title-page; and, but for some slight foreknowledge of the literary opinions, likes, dislikes, whims, prejudices, and crotchets of Mr. James Russell Lowell, we should have had much difficulty in attributing so very loose a brochure to him. The *Fable* is essentially "loose,"—ill-conceived and feebly executed, as well in detail as in general. Some good hints and some sparkling witticisms do not serve to compensate us for its rambling plot (if plot it can be called), and for the want of artistic finish so particularly noticeable throughout the work, especially in its



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versification. In Mr. Lowell's prose efforts we have before observed a certain disjointedness, but never, until now, in his verse; and we confess some surprise at his putting forth so unpolished a performance. The author of *The Legend of Brittany* (which is decidedly the noblest poem, of the same length, written by an American) could not do a better thing than to take the advice of those who mean him well, in spite of his fanaticism, and leave prose, with satiric verse, to those who are better able to manage them; while he contents himself with that class of poetry for which, and for which alone, he seems to have an especial vocation—the poetry of sentiment. This, to be sure, is not the very loftiest order of verse, for it is far inferior to either that of the imagination or that of the passions; but it is the loftiest region in which Mr. Lowell can get his breath without difficulty.

Our primary objection to this *Fable for the Critics* has reference to a point which we have already touched in a general way. "The malevolence appears." We laugh not so much at the author's victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. The very title of the book shows the want of a due sense in respect to the satirical essence, sarcasm. This "Fable," this severe lesson, is meant "for the Critics." "Ah!" we say to ourselves at once, "we see how it is. Mr. L. is a poor-devil poet, and some critic has been reviewing him, and making him feel very uncomfortable; where-

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upon, bearing in mind that Lord Byron, when similarly assailed, avenged his wrongs in a satire which he called *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, he (Mr. Lowell), imitative as usual, has been endeavoring to get redress in a parallel manner, by a satire with a parallel title, *A Fable for the Critics*,"

All this the reader says to himself; and all this tells against Mr. L. in two ways,—first, by suggesting unlucky comparisons between Byron and Lowell, and, secondly, by reminding us of the various criticisms in which we have been amused (rather ill-naturedly) at seeing Mr. Lowell "used up."

The title starts us on this train of thought, and the satire sustains us in it. Every reader versed in our literary gossip is at once put *dessous des cartes* as to the particular provocation which engendered the *Fable*. Miss Margaret Fuller, some time ago, in a silly and conceited piece of transcendentalism, which she called an *Essay on American Literature*, or something of that kind, had the consummate pleasantry, after selecting from the list of American poets Cornelius Mathews and William Ellery Channing for especial commendation, to speak of Longfellow as a booby, and of Lowell as so wretched a poetaster "as to be disgusting even to his best friends." All this Miss Fuller said, if not in our precise words, still in words quite as much to the purpose. Why she said it Heaven only knows, unless it was because she was Margaret Fuller, and wished to be

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taken for nobody else. Messrs. Longfellow and Lowell, so pointedly picked out for abuse as the worst of our poets, are, upon the whole, perhaps, our best; although Bryant and one or two others are scarcely inferior. As for the two favorites selected just as pointedly for laudation by Miss F., it is really difficult to think of them in connection with poetry without laughing. Mr. Mathews once wrote some sonnets "On Man," and Mr. Channing some lines on "A Tin Can," or something of that kind; and if the former gentleman be not the very worst poet that ever existed on the face of the earth, it is only because he is not quite so bad as the latter. To speak algebraically: Mr. M. is execrable, but Mr. C. is  $x$  plus I-ecrable.

Mr. Lowell has obviously aimed his *Fable* at Miss Fuller's head, in the first instance, with an eye to its ricocheting so as to knock down Mr. Mathews in the second. Miss F. is first introduced as Miss F.—, rhyming to "cooler," and afterward as "Miranda"; while poor Mr. M. is brought in upon all occasions, head and shoulders; and now and then a sharp thing, although never very original, is said of them or at them; but all the true satiric effect wrought is that produced by the satirist against himself. The reader is all the time smiling to think that so unsurpassable a—what shall we call her?—we wish to be civil—a transcendentalist as Miss Fuller, should, by such a criticism, have had the power to put a respectable poet in such a passion.

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As for the plot or conduct of this *Fable*, the less we say of it the better. It is so weak, so flimsy, so ill put together, as to be not worth the trouble of understanding; something, as usual, about Apollo and Daphne. Is there no originality on the face of the earth? Mr. Lowell's total want of it is shown at all points, very especially in his preface of rhyming verse written without distinction by lines or initial capitals (a hackneyed matter, originating, we believe, with *Frazer's Magazine*), very especially, also, in his long continuations of some particular rhyme,—a fashion introduced, if we remember aright, by Leigh Hunt, more than twenty-five years ago, in his *Feast of the Poets*, which, by the way, has been Mr. L.'s model in many respects.

Although ill-temper has evidently engendered this *Fable*, it is by no means a satire throughout. Much of it is devoted to panegyric; but our readers would be quite puzzled to know the grounds of the author's laudations, in many cases, unless made acquainted with a fact which we think it as well they should be informed of at once. Mr. Lowell is one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics; and no Southerner who does not wish to be insulted, and at the same time revolted by a bigotry the most obstinately blind and deaf, should ever touch a volume by this author.<sup>1</sup> His

<sup>1</sup> This *Fable for the Critics*, this literary satire, this benevolent *jeu d'esprit* is disgraced by such passages as the following:

Forty fathers of Freedom, of whom twenty bred  
Their sons for the rice swamps at so much a head,  
And their daughters for—faugh!

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fanaticism about slavery is a mere local outbreak of the same innate wrongheadedness which, if he owned slaves, would manifest itself in atrocious ill-treatment of them, with murder of any Abolitionist who should endeavor to set them free. A fanatic of Mr. L.'s species is simply a fanatic for the sake of fanaticism, and must be a fanatic in whatever circumstances you place him.

His prejudices on the topic of slavery break out everywhere in his present book. Mr. L. has not the common honesty to speak well, even in a literary sense, of any man who is not a ranting Abolitionist. With the exception of Mr. Poe (who has written some commendatory criticisms on his poems), no Southerner is mentioned at all in this *Fable*. It is a fashion among Mr. Lowell's set to affect a belief that there is no such thing as Southern literature. Northerners, people who have really nothing to speak of as men of letters, are cited by the dozen, and lauded by this candid critic without stint, while Legaré, Simms, Longstreet, and others of equal note are passed by in contemptuous silence. Mr. L. cannot carry his frail honesty of opinion even so far south as New York. All whom he praises are Bostonians. Other writers are barbarians, and satirized accordingly, if mentioned at all.

To show the general manner of the *Fable*, we quote a portion of what he says about Mr. Poe:



## James Russell Lowell

Here comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge,  
Three fifths of him genius, and two fifths sheer fudge,  
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,  
In a way to make all men of common sense d—n metres,  
Who has written some things far the best of their kind;  
But somehow the heart seems squeezed out by the mind.

We may observe here that profound ignorance on any particular topic is always sure to manifest itself by some allusion to "common sense" as an all-sufficient instructor. So far from Mr. P.'s talking "like a book" on the topic at issue, his chief purpose has been to demonstrate that there exists no book on the subject worth talking about; and "common sense," after all, has been the basis on which he relied, in contradistinction from the uncommon nonsense of Mr. L. and the small pedants.

And now let us see how far the unusual "common sense" of our satirist has availed him in the structure of his verse. First, by way of showing what his intention was, we quote three accidentally accurate lines:

But a boy | he could ne | ver be right | ly defined.  
As I said | he was ne | ver precise | ly unkind.  
But as Ci | cero says | he won't say | this or that.

Here it is clearly seen that Mr. L. intends a line of four anapæsts. (An anapæst is a foot composed of two short syllables followed by a long.) With this observation we will now simply copy a few of the lines



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which constitute the body of the poem, asking any of our readers to read them if they can; that is to say, we place the question, without argument, on the broad basis of the very commonest "common sense":

They 're all from one source, monthly, weekly, diurnal . .  
Disperse all one's good and condense all one's poor traits . . .  
The one's two thirds Norseman, the other half Greek . . .  
He has imitators in scores who omit . . .  
Should suck milk, strong will-giving brave, such as runs . . .  
Along the far railroad the steam-snake glide white . . .  
From the same runic type-fount and alphabet . . .  
Earth has six truest patriots, four discoverers of ether . . .  
Every cockboat that swims clears its fierce (pop) gundeck at  
    him . . .  
Is some of it pr——no, 't is not even prose . . .  
O'er his principles when something else turns up trumps . . .  
But a few silly (sylo I mean) gisms that squat 'em . . .  
*Nos*, we don't want extra freezing in winter . . .  
Plough, dig, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all things  
    new . . .

But enough; we have given a fair specimen of the general versification. It might have been better, but we are quite sure that it could not have been worse. So much for "common sense," in Mr. Lowell's understanding of the term. Mr. L. should not have meddled with the anapæstic rhythm; it is exceedingly awkward in the hands of one who knows nothing about it and who will persist in fancying that he can write it by ear. Very especially he should have avoided this

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rhythm in satire, which, more than any other branch of letters, is depending upon seeming trifles for its effect. Two thirds of the force of the *Dunciad* may be referred to its exquisite finish; and had the *Fable for the Critics* been (what it is not) the quintessence of the satiric spirit itself, it would, nevertheless, in so slovenly a form, have failed. As it is, no failure was ever more complete or more pitiable. By the publication of a book at once so ambitious and so feeble, so malevolent in design and so harmless in execution, a work so roughly and clumsily yet so weakly constructed, so very different, in body and spirit, from anything that he has written before, Mr. Lowell has committed an irrevocable *faux pas* and lowered himself at least fifty per cent in the literary public opinion.





## Bayard Taylor



BLUSH to see, in the *Literary World*, an invidious notice of Bayard Taylor's *Rhymes of Travel*. What makes the matter worse, the critique is from the pen of one who, although undeservedly, holds, himself, some position as a poet; and what makes the matter worst, the attack is anonymous, and (while ostensibly commending) most zealously endeavors to damn the young writer "with faint praise." In his whole life, the author of the criticism never published a poem, long or short, which could compare, either in the higher merits or in the minor morals of the Muse, with the worst of Mr. Taylor's compositions.

Observe the generalizing, disingenuous, patronizing tone:

"It is the empty charlatan, to whom all things are alike impossible, who attempts everything. He can do one thing as well as another; for he can really do

## Bayard Taylor

nothing. . . . Mr. Taylor's volume, as we have intimated, is an advance upon his previous publication. We could have wished, indeed, something more of restraint in the rhetoric, but," etc., etc., etc.

The concluding sentence, here, is an excellent example of one of the most ingeniously malignant of critical ruses—that of condemning an author, in especial, for what the world, in general, feel to be his principal merit. In fact, the "rhetoric" of Mr. Taylor, in the sense intended by the critic, is Mr. Taylor's distinguishing excellence. He is unquestionably the most terse, glowing, and vigorous of all our poets, young or old—in point, I mean, of expression. His sonorous, well-balanced rhythm puts me often in mind of Campbell (in spite of our anonymous friend's implied sneer at "mere jingling of rhymes, brilliant and successful for the moment"), and his rhetoric in general is of the highest order. By "rhetoric" I intend the mode generally in which thought is presented. Where shall we find more magnificent passages than these?

First queenly Asia, from the fallen thrones  
Of twice three thousand years,  
Came *with the woe a grieving goddess owns*  
*Who longs for mortal tears ;*  
The dust of ruin to her mantle clung  
And dimmed her crown of gold,  
While *the majestic sorrows of her tongue*  
*From Tyre to Indus rolled.*



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Bayard Taylor



## Bayard Taylor

"Mourn with me, sisters, in my realm of woe

*Whose only glory streams*

*From its lost childhood, like an Arctic glow*

*Which sunless winter dreams.*

*In the red desert moulders Babylon*

*And the wild serpent's hiss*

*Echoes in Petra's palaces of stone*

*And waste Persepolis."*

Then from her seat, *amid the palms embowered*

*That shade the Lion-land,*

Swart Africa in dusky aspect towered,

The fetters on her hand,

Backward she saw, from out the drear eclipse,

The mighty Theban years,

*And the deep anguish of her mournful lips*

*Interpreted her tears.*

I copy these passages, first, because the critic in question has copied them without the slightest appreciation of their grandeur, for they are grand; and, secondly, to put the question of "rhetoric" at rest. No artist who reads them will deny that they are the perfection of skill in their way. But, thirdly, I wish to call attention to the glowing imagination evinced in the lines italicized. My very soul revolts at such efforts (as the one I refer to) to depreciate such poems as Mr. Taylor's. Is there no honor, no chivalry left in the land? Are our most deserving writers to be forever sneered down, or hooted down, or damned down with faint praise, by a set of men who possess little other ability than that

## Bayard Taylor

which assures temporary success to them, in common with Swaim's Panacea or Morrison's Pills? The fact is, some person should write, at once, a magazine paper exposing—ruthlessly exposing, the *dessous des cartes* of our literary affairs. He should show how and why it is that the ubiquitous quack in letters can always "succeed," while genius (which implies self-respect, with a scorn of creeping and crawling) must inevitably succumb. He should point out the "easy arts" by which any one, base enough to do it, can get himself placed at the very head of American letters by an article in that magnanimous journal, the — *Review*. He should explain, too, how readily the same work can be induced (as in the case of Simms), to vilify, and vilify personally, any one not a Northerner, for a trifling "consideration." In fact, our criticism needs a thorough regeneration, and must have it.





## Elizabeth Frieze Ellett



RS. Ellett, or Ellet, has been long before the public as an author. Having contributed largely to the newspapers and other periodicals in her youth, she first made her *début* on a more comprehensive scale, as the writer of *Teresa Contaríní*, a five-act tragedy, which had considerable merit, but was withdrawn after its first night of representation at the Park. This occurred at some period previous to the year 1834; the precise date I am unable to remember. The ill-success of the play had little effect in repressing the ardor of the poetess, who has since furnished numerous papers to the magazines. Her articles are, for the most part, in the *rifacimento* way, and although, no doubt, composed in good faith, have the disadvantage of looking as if hashed up for just so much money as they will bring. The charge of wholesale plagiarism which has been adduced against Mrs. Ellett, I confess that I have not felt sufficient interest in her works to investigate, and am therefore bound to believe it unfounded. In person, short and much inclined to *embonpoint*.





## Henry B. Hirst



R. Henry B. Hirst, of Philadelphia, has, undoubtedly, some merit as a poet. His sense of beauty is keen although indiscriminate; and his versification would be unusually effective but for the spirit of hyperism, or exaggeration, which seems to be the ruling feature of the man. He is always sure to overdo a good thing; and, in especial, he insists upon rhythmical effects until they cease to have any effect at all; or until they give to his compositions an air of mere oddity. His principal defect, however, is a want of constructive ability; he can never put together a story intelligibly. His chief sin is imitateness. He never writes anything which does not immediately put us in mind of something that we have seen better written before. Not to do him injustice, however, I here quote two stanzas from a little poem of his called *The Owl*. The passages italicized are highly imaginative:



## Henry B. Hirst

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When twilight fades and evening falls  
Alike on tree and tower,  
*And Silence, like a pensive maid,*  
*Walks round each slumbering bower ;*  
When fragrant flowerets fold their leaves,  
And all is still in sleep,  
The hornèd owl *on moonlit wing*  
*Flies from the donjon keep.*

And he calls aloud—"Too-whit! too-whoo!"  
And the nightingale is still,  
*And the pattering step of the hurrying hare*  
*Is hushed upon the hill ;*  
And he crouches low in the dewy grass  
As the *lord of the night* goes by,  
*Not with a loudly whirring wing*  
*But like a lady's sigh.*

No one, save a poet at heart, could have conceived these images; and they are embodied with much skill. In the "pattering step," etc., we have an admirable "echo of sound to sense," and the title, "lord of the night," applied to the owl, does Mr. Hirst infinite credit, if the idea be original with Mr. Hirst. Upon the whole, the poems of this author are eloquent (or perhaps elocutionary) rather than poetic; but he has poetical merit, beyond a doubt,—merit which his enemies need not attempt to smother by any mere ridicule thrown upon the man.

To my face, and in the presence of my friends, Mr. H. has always made a point of praising my own poetical

## Henry B. Hirst

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efforts; and, for this reason, I should forgive him, perhaps, the amiable weakness of abusing them anonymously. In a late number of the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, he does me the honor of attributing to my pen a ballad called *Ulalume*, which has been going the rounds of the press, sometimes with my name to it, sometimes with Mr. Willis's, and sometimes with no name at all. Mr. Hirst insists upon it that I wrote it, and it is just possible that he knows more about the matter than I do myself. Speaking of a particular passage, he says:

“ We have spoken of the mystical appearance of Astarte as a fine touch of art. This is borrowed, and from the first canto of Hirst's *Endymion* [The reader will observe that the anonymous critic has no personal acquaintance whatever with Mr. Hirst, but takes care to call him “ Hirst ” simply, just as we say “ Homer ”] —from Hirst's *Endymion*, published years since in the *Southern Literary Messenger*.

Slowly Endymion bent, the light Elysian  
Flooding his figure. Kneeling on one knee,  
He loosed his sandals, lea  
And lake and woodland glittering on his vision—  
A fairy landscape, bright and beautiful,  
With Venus at her full.

“ Astarte is another name for Venus; and when we remember that Diana is about to descend to Endymion;

## Henry B. Hirst

that the scene which is about to follow is one of love; that Venus is the star of love; and that Hirst, by introducing it as he does, shadows out his story exactly as Mr. Poe introduces his Astarte, the plagiarism of idea becomes evident."

Now I really feel ashamed to say that, as yet, I have not perused *Endymion*, for Mr. Hirst will retort at once, "That is no fault of mine, you should have read it, I gave you a copy; and, besides, you had no business to fall asleep when I did you the honor of reading it to you." Without a word of excuse, therefore, I will merely copy the passage in *Ulalume*, which the author of *Endymion* says I purloined from the lines quoted above:

And now, as the night was senescent  
And star-dials pointed to morn,  
As the star-dials hinted of morn,  
At the end of my path a liquescent  
And nebulous lustre was born,  
Out of which a miraculous crescent  
Arose with a duplicate horn,  
Astarte's bediamonded crescent,  
Distinct with its duplicate horn.

Now, I may be permitted to regret—really to regret—that I can find no resemblance between the two passages in question; for *malo cum Platone errare*, etc., and to be a good imitator of Henry B. Hirst is quite honor enough for me.

## Henry B. Hirst

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In the meantime, here is a passage from another little ballad of mine, called *Lenore*, first published in 1830:

How shall the ritual, then, be read? the requiem how be  
    sung  
By you, by yours, the evil eye, by yours, the slanderous  
    tongue  
That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?

And here is a passage from *The Penance of Roland*, by Henry B. Hirst, published in *Graham's Magazine* for January, 1848:

Mine the tongue that wrought this evil, mine the false and  
    slanderous tongue  
That done to death the Lady Gwineth—Oh, my soul is sadly  
    wrong!  
“ Demon! devil,” groaned the warrior, “ devil of the evil eye! ”

Now my objection to all this is not that Mr. Hirst has appropriated my property (I am fond of a nice phrase), but that he has not done it so cleverly as I could wish. Many a lecture, on literary topics have I given Mr. H.; and I confess that, in general, he has adopted my advice so implicitly that his poems, upon the whole, are little more than our conversations done into verse.

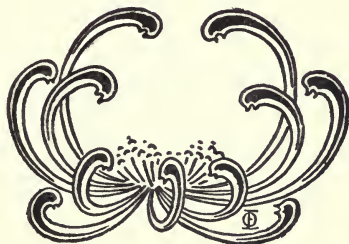
“ Steal, dear Endymion,” I used to say to him, “ for very well do I know you can't help it; and the more you put in your book that is not your own, why, the better your book will be; but be cautious and steal with

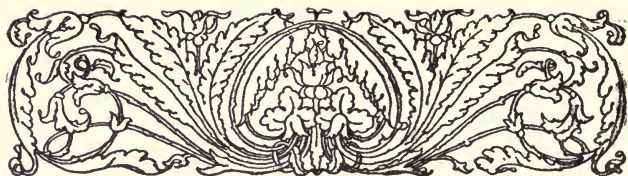
## Henry B. Hirst

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an air. In regard to myself, you need give yourself no trouble about me. I shall always feel honored in being of use to you; and provided you purloin my poetry in a reputable manner, you are welcome to just as much of it as you (who are a very weak little man) can conveniently carry away."

So far, let me confess, Mr. Hirst has behaved remarkably well in largely availing himself of the privilege thus accorded; but, in the case now at issue, he stands in need of some gentle rebuke. I do not object to his stealing my verses; but I do object to his stealing them in bad grammar. My quarrel with him is not, in short, that he did this thing, but that he *has went and done did it*.





## William Wallace

**A**MONG our men of genius whom, because they are men of genius, we neglect, let me not fail to mention William Wallace, of Kentucky. Had Mr. W. been born under the wings of that ineffable buzzard, the *North American Review*, his unusual merits would long ago have been blazoned to the world, as the far inferior merits of Sprague, Dana, and others of like calibre have already been blazoned. Neither of these gentlemen has written a poem worthy to be compared with *The Chant of a Soul*, published in the *Union Magazine* for November, 1848. It is a noble composition throughout; imaginative, eloquent, full of dignity, and well sustained. It abounds in detached images of high merit; for example,

Your early splendor's gone  
Like stars into a cloud withdrawn—  
Like music laid asleep  
In dried up fountains.



## William Wallace

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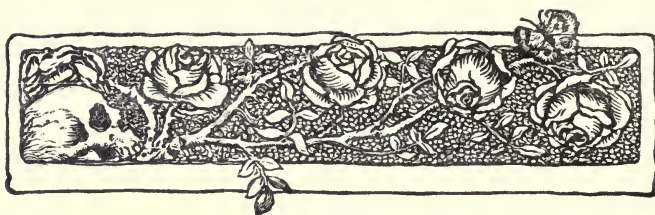
Enough, I am, and shall not choose to die.  
No matter what our future fate may be,  
To live, is in itself a majesty.

And Truth, arising from yon deep,  
Is plain as a white statue on a tall, dark steep.

Then

The earth and heaven were fair,  
While only less than Gods seemed all my fellow men.  
Oh, the delight, the gladness,  
The sense, yet love, of madness,  
The glorious choral exultations,  
The far-off sounding of the banded nations,  
The wings of angels in melodious sweeps  
Upon the mountain's hazy steeps,  
The very dead astir within their coffined deeps,  
The dreamy veil that wrapt the star and sod—  
A swathe of purple, gold, and amethyst,  
And, luminous behind the billowing mist  
Something that looked to my young eyes like God.

I admit that the defect charged by an envious critic upon Bayard Taylor—the sin of excessive rhetoricianism—is, in some measure, chargeable to Wallace. He now and then permits enthusiasm to hurry him into bombast; but at this point he is rapidly improving, and, if not disheartened by the cowardly neglect of those who dare not praise a poetical aspirant with genius and without influence, will soon rank as one of the very noblest of American poets. In fact, he is so now.



## E. P. Whipple and other Critics

**Q**UR most analytic, if not altogether our best, critic (Mr. Whipple, perhaps, excepted) is Mr. William A. Jones, author of *The Analyst*. How he would write elaborate criticisms I cannot say; but his summary judgments of authors are, in general, discriminative and profound. In fact, his papers on Emerson and on Macaulay, published in *Arcturus*, are better than merely "profound," if we take the word in its now desecrated sense; for they are at once pointed, lucid, and just; as summaries, leaving nothing to be desired.

Mr. Whipple has less analysis, and far less candor, as his depreciation of *Jane Eyre* will show; but he excels Mr. Jones in sensibility to beauty, and is thus the better critic of poetry. I have read nothing finer in its way than his eulogy on Tennyson. I say "eulogy," for the essay in question is unhappily little more; and Mr. Whipple's paper on Miss Barrett was nothing more. He has less discrimination than Mr. Jones,

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and a more obtuse sense of the critical office. In fact, he has been infected with that unmeaning and transparent heresy, the cant of critical Boswellism, by dint of which we are to shut our eyes tightly to all authorial blemishes, and open them, like owls, to all authorial merits. Papers thus composed may be good in their way, just as an impertinent cicerone is good in his way; and the way, in either case, may still be a small one.

Boccalini, in his *Advertisements from Parnassus*, tells us that Zoilus once presented Apollo with a very caustic review of a very admirable poem. The god asked to be shown the beauties of the work; but the critic replied that he troubled himself only about the errors. Hereupon Apollo gave him a sack of unwinnowed wheat, bidding him pick out all the chaff for his pains.

Now this fable does very well as a hit at the critics; but I am by no means sure that the deity was in the right. The fact is, that the limits of the strict critical duty are grossly misapprehended. We may go so far as to say that, while the critic is permitted to play, at times, the part of the mere commentator, while he is allowed, by way of merely interesting his readers, to put in the fairest light the merits of his author, his legitimate task is still, in pointing out and analyzing defects and showing how the work might have been improved, to aid the general cause of letters, without

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undue heed of the individual literary men. Beauty, to be brief, should be considered in the light of an axiom, which, to become at once evident, needs only to be distinctly put. It is not beauty if it require to be demonstrated as such; and thus, to point out too particularly the merits of a work is to admit that they are not merits altogether.

When I say that both Mr. Jones and Mr. Whipple are, in some degree, imitators of Macaulay, I have no design that my words should be understood as disparagement. The style and general conduct of Macaulay's critical papers could scarcely be improved. To call his manner "conventional" is to do it gross injustice. The manner of Carlyle is conventional—with himself. The style of Emerson is conventional—with himself and Carlyle. The style of Miss Fuller is conventional—with herself and Emerson and Carlyle; that is to say, it is a triple-distilled conventionality; and by the word "conventionality," as here used, I mean very nearly what, as regards personal conduct, we style "affectation," that is, an assumption of airs or tricks which have no basis in reason or common sense. The quips, quirks, and curt oracularities of the Emersons, Alcotts, and Fullers, are simply Lily's euphuisms revived. Very different, indeed, are the peculiarities of Macaulay. He has his mannerisms; but we see that, by dint of them, he is enabled to accomplish the extremes of unquestionable excellences, the extreme of

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clearness, of vigor (dependent upon clearness), of grace, and very especially of thoroughness. For his short sentences, for his antitheses, for his modulations, for his climaxes,—for everything that he does,—a very slight analysis suffices to show a distinct reason. His manner, thus, is simply the perfection of that justifiable rhetoric which has its basis in common sense, and to say that such rhetoric is never called in to the aid of genius, is simply to disparage genius, and by no means to discredit the rhetoric. It is nonsense to assert that the highest genius would not be benefited by attention to its modes of manifestation, by availing itself of that natural art which it too frequently despises. Is it not evident that the more intrinsically valuable the rough diamond, the more gain accrues to it from polish?

Now, since it would be nearly impossible to vary the rhetoric of Macaulay in any material degree without deterioration in the essential particulars of clearness, vigor, etc., those who write after Macaulay have to choose between the two horns of a dilemma: they must be weak and original, or imitative and strong; and since imitation, in a case of this kind, is merely adherence to truth and reason as pointed out by one who feels their value, the author who should forego the advantages of the "imitation" for the mere sake of being erroneously original "*n'est pas si sage qu'il croit.*"

The true course to be pursued by our critics, justly



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sensible of Macaulay's excellences, is not, however, to be content with tamely following in his footsteps, but to outstrip him in his own path,—a path not so much his as nature's. We must not fall into the error of fancying that he is perfect merely because he excels (in point of style) all his British contemporaries. Some such idea as this seems to have taken possession of Mr. Jones when he says:

“ Macaulay's style is admirable: full of color, perfectly clear, free from all obstructions, exactly English, and as pointedly antithetical as possible. We have marked two passages on Southey and Byron, so happy as to defy improvement. The one is a sharp epigrammatic paragraph on Southey's political bias:

“ ‘ Government is to Mr. Southey one of the fine arts. He judges of a theory or a public measure, of a religion, a political party, a peace or a war, as men judge of a picture or a statue, by the effect produced on his imagination. A chain of associations is to him what a chain of reasoning is to other men; and what he calls his opinions are, in fact, merely his tastes.’

“ The other a balanced character of Lord Byron:

“ ‘ In the rank of Lord Byron, in his understanding, in his character, in his very person, there was a strange union of opposite extremes. He was born to all that men covet and admire. But in every one of those eminent advantages which he possessed over others,



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there was mingled something of misery and debasement. He was sprung from a house, ancient, indeed, and noble, but degraded and impoverished by a series of crimes and follies which had attained a scandalous publicity. The kinsman whom he succeeded had died poor, and, but for merciful judges, would have died upon the gallows. The young peer had great intellectual powers; yet there was an unsound part in his mind. He had naturally a generous and tender heart; but his temper was wayward and irritable. He had a head which statuary loved to copy, and a foot the deformity of which the beggars in the street mimicked.' "

Let us now look at the first of these paragraphs. The opening sentence is inaccurate at all points. The word "government" does not give the author's idea with sufficient definitiveness; for the term is more frequently applied to the system by which the affairs of a nation are regulated than to the act of regulating. "The government," we say, for example, "does so and so," meaning those who govern. But Macaulay intends simply the act or acts called "governing," and this word should have been used, as a matter of course. The "Mr." prefixed to "Southey" is superfluous, for no sneer is designed; and in "mistering" a well-known author, we hint that he is not entitled to that exemption which we accord to Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare. "*To Mr. Southey*" would have been right,

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had the succeeding words been "government seems one of the fine arts"; but, as the sentence stands, "*With Mr. Southey*" is demanded. "Southey," too, being the principal subject of the paragraph, should precede "government," which is mentioned only in its relation to Southey. "One of the fine arts" is pleonastic, since the phrase conveys nothing more than "a fine art" would convey.

The second sentence is quite as faulty. Here Southey loses his precedence as the subject; and thus the "He" should follow "a theory," "a public measure," etc. By "religion" is meant a "creed"; this latter word should therefore be used. The conclusion of the sentence is very awkward. Southey is said to judge of a peace or a war, etc., as men judge of a picture or a statue, and the words which succeed are intended to explain how men judge of a picture or a statue. These words should, therefore, run thus: "by the effect produced on their imaginations." "Produced," moreover, is neither so exact nor so "English" as "wrought." In saying that Southey judges of a political party, etc., as men judge of a picture, etc., Southey is quite excluded from the category of "men." "Other men," was no doubt originally written, but "other" erased, on account of the "other men" occurring in the sentence below.

Coming to the last, we find that "a chain of associations" is not properly paralleled by "a chain of reason-

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ing." We must say either "a chain of association," to meet the "reasoning," or "a chain of reasons," to meet the "associations." The repetition of "what" is awkward and unpleasant. The entire paragraph should be thus remodelled:

"With Southey, governing is a fine art. Of a theory or a public measure—of a creed, a political party, a peace or a war—he judges by the imaginative effect as only such things as pictures or statues are judged of by other men. What to them a chain of reasoning is, to him is a chain of association; and, as to his opinions, they are nothing but his tastes."

The blemishes in the paragraph about Byron are more negative than those in the paragraph about Southey. The first sentence needs vivacity. The adjective "opposite" is superfluous; so is the particle "there." The second and third sentences are, properly, one. "Some" would fully supply the place of "something of." The whole phrase, "which he possessed over others," is supererogatory. "Was sprung," in place of "sprang," is altogether unjustifiable. The triple repetition of "and," in the fourth sentence, is awkward. "Notorious crimes and follies" would express all that is implied in "crimes and follies which had attained a scandalous publicity." The fifth sentence might be well curtailed; and as it stands has

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an unintentional and unpleasant sneer. "Intellect" would do as well as "intellectual powers"; and this (the sixth) sentence might otherwise be shortened advantageously. The whole paragraph, in my opinion, would be better thus expressed:

"In Lord Byron's rank, understanding, character,—even in person,—we find a strange union of extremes. Whatever men covet and admire became his by right of birth; yet debasement and misery were mingled with each of his eminent advantages. He sprang from a house, ancient, it is true, and noble, but degraded and impoverished by a series of notorious crimes. But for merciful judges, the pauper kinsman whom he succeeded would have been hanged. The young peer had an intellect great, perhaps, yet partially unsound. His heart was generous, but his temper wayward; and while statuaries copied his head, beggars mimicked the deformity of his foot."

In these remarks, my object is not so much to point out inaccuracies in the most accurate stylist of his age as to hint that our critics might surpass him on his own ground, and yet leave themselves something to learn in the moralities of manner.

Nothing can be plainer than that our position, as a literary colony of Great Britain, leads us into wrongdoing, indirectly, our own authors by exaggerating the

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merits of those across the water. Our most reliable critics extol—and extol without discrimination—such English compositions as, if written in America, would be either passed over without notice or unscrupulously condemned. Mr. Whipple, for example, whom I have mentioned in this connection with Mr. Jones, is decidedly one of our most “reliable” critics. His honesty I dispute as little as I doubt his courage or his talents; but here is an instance of the want of common discrimination into which he is occasionally hurried by undue reverence for British intellect and British opinion. In a review of the *Drama of Exile, and Other Poems*, by Miss Barrett (now Mrs. Browning), he speaks of the following passage as “in every respect faultless—sublime”:

Hear the steep generations how they fall  
Adown the visionary stairs of Time,  
Like supernatural thunders—far yet near,  
Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills!

Now here, saying nothing of the affectation in “adown,” not alluding to the insoluble paradox of “far yet near,” not mentioning the inconsistent metaphor involved in the sowing of fiery echoes, adverting but slightly to the misuse of “like” in place of “as,” and to the impropriety of making anything fall like thunder, which has never been known to fall at all, merely hinting, too, at the misapplication of



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“steep” to the “generations” instead of to the “stairs” (a perversion in no degree justified by the fact that so preposterous a figure as synecdoche exists in the schoolbooks),—letting these things pass, we shall still find it difficult to understand how Mrs. Browning should have been led to think that the principal idea itself—the abstract idea, the idea of tumbling down stairs, in any shape, or under any circumstances—either a poetical or a decorous conception. And yet Mr. Whipple speaks of it as “sublime.” That the lines narrowly missed sublimity, I grant; that they came within a step of it, I admit; but, unhappily, the step is that one step which, time out of mind, has intervened between the sublime and the ridiculous. So true is this that any person—that even I—with a very partial modification of the imagery, a modification that shall not interfere with its richly spiritual tone, may elevate the passage into unexceptionability. For example:

Hear the far generations—how they crash  
From crag from crag down the precipitous Time,  
In multitudinous thunders that upstartle  
Aghast, the echoes from their cavernous lairs  
In the visionary hills!

No doubt my version has its faults; but it has at least the merit of consistency. Not only is a mountain more poetical than a pair of stairs, but echoes are more



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appropriately typified as wild beasts than as seeds; and echoes and wild beasts agree better with a mountain than does a pair of stairs with the sowing of seeds, even admitting that these seeds be seeds of fire, and be sown broadcast "among the hills" by a steep generation while in the act of tumbling down the stairs; that is to say, of coming down the stairs in too great a hurry to be capable of sowing the seeds accurately, as all seeds should be sown; nor is the matter rendered any better for Mrs. Browning, even if the construction of her sentence be understood as implying that the fiery seeds were sown, not immediately by the steep generations that tumbled down the stairs, but mediately, through the intervention of the "supernatural thunders" that were occasioned by the steep generations that were so unlucky as to tumble down the stairs.





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**T**HE Reverend Mr. Headley (why will he not put his full title in his title-pages ?) has in his *Sacred Mountains* been reversing the facts of the old fable about the mountains that brought forth the mouse, *parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus*; for in this instance it appears to be the mouse—the little *ridiculus mus*—that has been bringing forth the “mountains,” and a great litter of them, too. The epithet “funny,” however, is perhaps the only one which can be considered as thoroughly applicable to the book. We say that a book is a “funny” book, and nothing else, when it spreads over two hundred pages an amount of matter which could be conveniently presented in twenty of a magazine; that a book is a “funny” book, “only this and nothing more,” when it is written in that kind of phraseology, in which John Philpot Curran, when drunk, would

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<sup>1</sup> *The Sacred Mountains.* By J. T. Headley, author of *Napoleon and his Marshals, Washington and his Generals*, etc.

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have made a speech in at a public dinner; and, moreover, we do say, emphatically, that a book is a "funny" book, and nothing but a funny book, whenever it happens to be penned by Mr. Headley.

We should like to give some account of *The Sacred Mountains*, if the thing were only possible; but we cannot conceive that it is. Mr. Headley belongs to that numerous class of authors who must be read to be understood, and who, for that reason, very seldom are as thoroughly comprehended as they should be. Let us endeavor, however, to give some general idea of the work. "The design," says the author, in his preface, "is to render more familiar and life-like some of the scenes of the Bible." Here, in the very first sentence of his preface, we suspect the Reverend Mr. Headley of fibbing; for his design, as it appears to ordinary apprehension, is merely that of making a little money by selling a little book.

The mountains described are Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, Hor, Pisgah, Horeb, Carmel, Lebanon, Zion, Tabor, Olivet, and Calvary. Taking up these, one by one, the author proceeds, in his own very peculiar way, to "elocutionize" about them; we really do not know how else to express what it is that Mr. Headley does with these eminences. Perhaps if we were to say that he stood up before the reader and "made a speech" about them, one after the other, we should come still nearer the truth. By way of carrying out his design as an-

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nounced in the preface, that of rendering "more familiar and life-like some of the scenes," and so forth, he tells not only how each mountain is, and was, but how it might have been and ought to be, in his own opinion. To hear him talk, anybody would suppose that he had been at the laying of the corner-stone of Solomon's Temple, to say nothing of being born and brought up in the ark with Noah, and hail-fellow-well-met with every one of the beasts that went into it. If any person really desires to know how and why it was that the Deluge took place, but especially how,—if any person wishes to get minute and accurate information on the topic, let him read *The Sacred Mountains*, let him only listen to the Reverend Mr. Headley. He explains to us precisely how it all took place,—what Noah said and thought while the ark was building, and what the people, who saw him building the ark, said and thought about his undertaking such a work; and how the beasts, birds, and fishes looked as they came in arm-in-arm; and what the dove did, and what the raven did not—in short, all the rest of it; nothing could be more beautifully posted up. What can Mr. Headley mean, at page 17, by the remark that "there is no one who does not lament that there is not a fuller antediluvian history"? We are quite sure that nothing that ever happened before the flood has been omitted in the scrupulous researches of the author of *The Sacred Mountains*.

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He might, perhaps, wrap up the fruits of these researches in rather better English than that which he employs:

“Yet still the waters rose around them till all through the valleys nothing but little black islands of human beings were seen on the surface. . . . The more fixed the irrevocable decree, the heavier he leaned on the Omnipotent arm. . . . And lo! a solitary cloud comes drifting along the morning sky and catches against the top of the mountain. . . . At length emboldened by their own numbers they assembled tumultuously together. . . . Aaron never appears so perfect a character as Moses. . . . As he advanced from rock to rock the sobbing of the multitude that followed after tore his heart-strings. . . . Friends were following after whose sick Christ had healed. . . . The steady mountain threatened to lift from its base and be carried away. . . . Sometimes God's hatred of sin, sometimes His care for His children, sometimes the discipline of His church, were the motives. . . . Surely it was the mighty hand that laid on that trembling tottering mountain,” etc., etc., etc.

These things are not exactly as we could wish them, perhaps; but that a gentleman should know so much about Noah's ark and know anything about anything

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else, is scarcely to be expected. We have no right to require English grammar and accurate information about Moses and Aaron at the hands of one and the same author. For our parts, now we come to think of it, if we only understood as much about Mount Sinai and other matters as Mr. Headley does, we should make a point of always writing bad English upon principle, whether we knew better or not.

It may well be made a question, moreover, how far a man of genius is justified in discussing topics so serious as those handled by Mr. Headley, in any ordinary kind of style. One should not talk about Scriptural subjects as one would talk about the rise and fall of stocks or the proceedings of Congress. Mr. Headley has seemed to feel this, and has therefore elevated his manner—a little. For example:

“ The fields were smiling in verdure before his eyes ;  
the perfumed breezes floated by . . . The sun is  
sailing over the encampment. . . . That cloud  
was God’s pavilion ; the thunder was its sentinels ; and  
the lightning the lances’ points as they moved round  
the sacred trust . . . And how could he part with  
his children whom he had borne on his brave heart for  
more than forty years ? . . . Thus everything  
conspired to render Zion the spell-word of the nation,  
and on its summit the heart of Israel seemed to lie and  
throb . . . The sun died in the heavens ; an



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earthquake thundered on to complete the dismay," etc., etc.

Here no one can fail to perceive the beauty (in an antediluvian, or at least in a Pickwickian sense) of these expressions in general, about the floating of the breeze, the sailing of the sun, the thundering of the earthquake, and the throbbing of the heart as it lay on the top of the mountain.

The true artist, however, always rises as he proceeds, and in his last page or so brings all his elocution to a climax. Only hear Mr. Headley's *finale*. He has been describing the Crucifixion, and now soars into the sublime:

"How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight I cannot tell. I know not but tears fell like rain-drops from angelic eyes when they saw Christ spit upon and struck. I know not but there was silence on high for more than 'half an hour' when the scene of the Crucifixion was transpiring [a scene, as well as an event, always 'transpires' with Mr. Headley],—a silence unbroken save by the solitary sound of some harp-string on which unconsciously fell the agitated, trembling fingers of a seraph. I know not but all the radiant ranks on high, and even Gabriel himself, turned with the deepest solicitude to the Father's face, to see if He was calm and untroubled

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amid it all. I know not but His composed brow and serene majesty were all that restrained Heaven from one universal shriek of horror when they heard groans on Calvary—dying groans. I know not but they thought God had given His glory to another, but one thing I do know [Ah, there is really one thing Mr. Headley knows!], that when they saw through the vast design, comprehended the stupendous scene, the hills of God shook to a shout that never before rung over their bright tops, and the crystal sea trembled to a song that had never before stirred its bright depths, and the ‘Glory to God in the Highest,’ was a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.”

Here we have direct evidence of Mr. Headley’s accuracy not less than of his eloquence. “I know not but” that one is as vast as the other. The one thing that he does know, he knows to perfection: he knows not only what the chorus was (it was one of “hallelujahs and harping symphonies”), but also how much of it there was;—it was a “sevenfold chorus.” Mr. Headley is a mathematical man. Moreover he is a modest man; for he confesses (no doubt with tears in his eyes) that really there is one thing that he does not know. “How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight, I cannot tell.” Only think of that! I cannot!—I, Headley, really cannot tell how the Universe “felt” once upon a time! This is down-

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right bashfulness on the part of Mr. Headley. He could tell if he would only try. Why did he not inquire? Had he demanded of the Universe how it felt, can any one doubt that the answer would have been: "Pretty well, I thank you, my dear Headley; how do you feel yourself?"

"Quack" is a word that sounds well only in the mouth of a duck; and upon our honor we feel a scruple in using it; nevertheless the truth should be told; and the simple fact is, that the author of the *Sacred Mountains* is the Autocrat of all the Quacks. In saying this, we beg not to be misunderstood. We mean no disparagement to Mr. Headley. We admire that gentleman as much as any individual ever did except that gentleman himself. He looks remarkably well at all points—although perhaps best, EXAS—at a distance, as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilochus, who died ages before the vagabond was born—the reader will excuse the digression, but talking of one great man is very apt to put us in mind of another. We were saying (were we not?) that Mr. Headley is by no means to be sneered at as a quack. This might be justifiable, indeed, were he only a quack in a small way, a quack doing business by retail. But the wholesale dealer is entitled to respect. Besides, the reverend author of *Napoleon and his Marshals* was a quack to some purpose. He knows what he is about. We like perfection wherever we see it. We readily forgive a man for

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being a fool if he only be a perfect fool: and this is a particular in which we cannot put our hands upon our hearts and say that Mr. Headley is deficient. He acts upon the principle that if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well; and the thing that he "does" especially well is the public.





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**U**NDER the head of "Random Thoughts," "Odds and Ends," "Stray Leaves," "Scraps," "Breveties," and a variety of similar titles, we occasionally meet, in periodicals and elsewhere, with papers of rich interest and value, the result in some cases of much thought and more research, expended, however, at a manifest disadvantage, if we regard merely the estimate which the public are willing to set upon such articles. It sometimes occurs that in papers of this nature may be found a collective mass of general but more usually of classical erudition, which, if dexterously besprinkled over a proper surface of narrative, would be sufficient to make the fortunes of one or two hundred ordinary novelists in these our good days, when all heroes and heroines are necessarily men and women of "extensive acquirements." But for the most part these "Breveties," etc., are either piecemeal cullings at second-hand from a variety of sources hidden, or sup-

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posed to be hidden, or more audacious pilferings from those vast storehouses of brief facts, memoranda, and opinions in general literature, which are so abundant in all the principal libraries of Germany and France. Of the former species the *Koran* of Laurence Sterne is, at the same time, one of the most consummately impudent and silly, and it may well be doubted whether a single paragraph of any merit in the whole of it may not be found, nearly verbatim, in the works of some one of his immediate contemporaries. If the *Lacon* of Mr. Colton is any better, its superiority consists altogether in a deeper ingenuity in disguising his stolen wares, and in that prescriptive right of the strongest, which, time out of mind, has decided upon calling every Napoleon a conqueror, and every Dick Turpin a thief. Seneca, Machiavelli,<sup>1</sup> Balzac, the author of *La Manière de Bien Penser*, Bielfeld the German, who wrote in French *Les Premiers Traits de l'Erudition Universelle*, Rochefoucauld, Bacon, Bolingbroke, and especially Burdon, of "materials for thinking" memory, possess, among them, indisputable claims to the ownership of nearly everything worth owning in the book.

Of the latter species of theft we see frequent specimens in the continental magazines of Europe, and

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<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that much of what Colton has stolen from Machiavelli was previously stolen by Machiavelli from Plutarch. A MS. book of the *Apophthegms of the Ancients*, by this latter writer, having fallen into Machiavelli's hands, he put them nearly all into the mouth of the hero, Castruccio Castracani.



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occasionally meet with them even in the lower class of periodicals in Great Britain. These specimens are usually extracts, by wholesale, from such works as the *Bibliothèques des Memorabilia Literaria*, the *Recueil des Bonnes Pensées*, the *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses*, the *Literary Memoirs of Sallengré*, the *Mélanges Littéraires* of Suard and André, or the *Pièces Intéressantes et Peu Connues* of Laplace. D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, *Literary Character*, and *Calamities of Authors*, have of late years proved exceedingly convenient to some little American pilferers in this line, but are now becoming too generally known to allow much hope of their good things being any longer appropriated with impunity.

Such collections as those of which we have been speaking are usually entertaining in themselves, and for the most part we relish everything about them save their pretensions to originality. In offering, ourselves, something of the kind to our readers, we wish to be understood as disclaiming in a great degree every such pretension. Most of the following article is original, and will be readily recognized as such by the classical and general reader; some portions of it may have been written down in the words, or nearly in the words, of the primitive authorities. The whole is taken from a confused mass of marginal notes and entries in a commonplace-book. No certain arrangement has been considered necessary, and indeed so heterogeneous

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a farrago it would have been an endless task to methodize. We have chosen the heading *Pinakidia*, or Tablets, as one sufficiently comprehensive. It was used for a somewhat similar purpose by Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

The whole of Bulwer's elaborate argument on the immortality of the soul, which he has put into the mouth of "The Ambitious Student," may be confuted through the author's omission of one particular point in his summary of the attributes of Deity—a point which we cannot believe altogether omitted through accident. A single link is deficient in the chain, but the chain is worthless without it. No man doubts the immortality of the soul; yet of all truths, this truth of immortality is the most difficult to prove by any mere series of syllogisms. We would refer our readers to the argument here mentioned.

The rude, rough, wild waste has its power to please,

a line in one Mr. Odiorne's poem, *The Progress of Refinement*, is pronounced by the American author of a book entitled *Antediluvian Antiquities* "the very best alliteration in all poetry."

Lipsius, in his treatise *De Supplicio Crucis*, says that the upright beam of the cross was a fixture at the place of execution, whither the criminal was made to

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bear only the transverse arm. Consequently the painters are in error who depict our Saviour bearing the entire cross.

The tale in Plato's *Convivium*, that man at first was male and female, and that, though Jupiter cleft them asunder, there was a natural love toward one another, seems to be only a corruption of the account in *Genesis* of Eve's being made from Adam's rib.

Corneille has these lines in one of his tragedies:

Pleurez, pleurez, mes yeux, et fondez vous en eau,  
La moitié de ma vie a mis l'autre au tombeau,

which may be thus translated:

Weep, weep, my eyes! It is no time to laugh,  
For half myself has buried the other half.

Over the iron gate of a prison at Ferrara is this inscription: "Ingresso alla prigione di Torquato Tasso."

The Rabbi Manasseh published a book at Amsterdam entitled *The Hopes of Israel*. It was founded upon the supposed number and power of the Jews in America. This supposition was derived from a fabulous account by Montesini of his having found a vast concourse of Jews among the Cordilleras.

The word "assassin" is derived, according to Hyle, from *Hassa*, to kill. Some bring it from "Hassan," the

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first chief of the association; some from the Jewish *Essene*; Lemoine from a word meaning "herbage"; De Sacy and Von Hammer from *hashish*, the opiate of hemp leaves, of which the assassins made a singular use.

The origin of the phrase "corporal oath" is to be found in the ancient usage of touching, upon occasion of attestation, the *corporale*, or cloth, which covered the consecrated articles.

Montgomery, in his lectures on Literature (!), has the following: "Who does not turn with absolute contempt from the signs, and gems, and filters, and caves, and genii of Eastern tales as from the trinkets of a toy-shop and the trumpery of a raree show?" What man of genius but must answer "Not I"?

There is no particular air known throughout Switzerland by the name of *Ranz des Vaches*. Every canton has its own song, varying in words, notes, and even language. Mr. Cooper, the novelist, is our authority.

The Abbé de St. Pierre has fixed in his language two significant words, viz., *bienfaisance*, and the diminutive *la gloriôle*.

"Incidis in Scyllam cupiens vitare Charybdim" is

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neither in Virgil nor Ovid, as often supposed, but in the *Alexandreís* of Philip Gaultier, a French poet of the thirteenth century.

The Psalter of Solomon, which contains eighteen psalms, is a work which was found in Greek in the library of Augsburg, and has been translated into Latin by John Lewis de la Cerda. It is supposed not to be Solomon's, but the work of some Hellenistic Jew, and composed in imitation of David's *Psalms*. The Psalter was known to the ancients, and was formerly in the famous Alexandrian MS.

It is probable that the Queen of Sheba was Balkis, that Sheba was a kingdom in the southern part of Arabia Felix, and that the people were called Sabæans. These lines of Claudian relate to the people and queen:

Medis, levibasque Sabæis  
Imperat hic sexus; reginarumque sub armis  
Barbariæ pars magna jacet.

Sheridan declared he would rather be the author of the ballad called *Hosier's Ghost*, by Glover, than of the *Annals* of Tacitus.

The word "Jevohah" is not Hebrew. The Hebrews had no such letters as J or V. The word is properly "Jah Uah," compounded of *Jah* (essence) and *Uah*

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(existing). Its full meaning is the self-existing essence of all things.

The *Song of Solomon*, throwing aside the heading of the chapters, which is the work of the English translators, contains nothing which relates to the Saviour or the Church. It does not, like every other sacred book, contain even the name of the Deity.

The word translated "slanderers" in 1 Timothy iii., 2, and that translated "false accusers" in Titus ii., 3, are "female devils" in the original Greek of the New Testament.

The Hebrew language contains no word (except perhaps "Jehovah") which conveys to the mind the idea of eternity. The translators of the Old Testament have used the word "eternity" but once (Isa. lvii., 15).

A version of the Psalms was published in 1642 by William Slayter, of which this is a specimen:

The righteous shall his sorrows scan,  
And laugh at him, and say, "Behold!  
What hath become of this here man,  
That on his riches was so bold."

Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, has this passage:

When the scourge  
Inexorably, and the torturing hour  
Call us to penance;



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Gray, in his *Ode to Adversity*, has,

Thou tamer of the human breast,  
Whose iron scourge and torturing hour  
The bad affright.

Gray tells us that the image of his bard, where

Loose his beard, and hoary hair  
Streamed like a meteor to the troubled air,

was taken from a picture by Raphael; yet the beard of  
Hudibras is also likened to a meteor:

This hairy meteor did denounce  
The fall of sceptres and of crowns.

Dryden, in his *Absalom and Achitophel*, has these  
lines:

David for him his tuneful harp hath strung,  
And heaven had wanted one immortal song;

Pope, in his *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, has,

Friend of my life, which did not you prolong,  
The world had wanted many an idle song.

In Suidas is a letter from Dionysius the Areopagite, dated Heliopolis in the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad (the year of Christ's Crucifixion), to his friend Apollophanes, in which is mentioned a total eclipse of the sun at noon. "Either," says Dionysius, "the

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author of nature suffers, or he sympathizes with some who do."

A curious passage in a letter from Cicero to his literary friend Papirius Pætus, shows that our custom of annexing a farce or pantomime to a tragic drama existed among the Romans.

In *Hudibras* are these lines:

Each window, like the pillory, appears  
With heads thrust through, nailed by the ears;

Young, in his *Love of Fame*, has the following:

An opera, like a pillory, may be said  
To nail our ears down and expose our head.

Goldsmith's celebrated lines,

Man wants but little here below,  
Nor wants that little long,

are stolen from Young, who has

Man wants but little, nor that little long.

Archbishop Usher, in a manuscript of *St. Patrick's Life*, said to have been found at Louvain as an original of a very remote date, detected several entire passages purloined from his own writings.

"The Slipper of Cinderella," says the editor of the

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new edition of Wharton, " finds a parallel in the history of Rhodope." *Cinderella* is a tale of universal currency. An ancient Danish ballad has some of the incidents. It is popular amongst the Welsh, also among the Poles, in Hesse, and in Servia. Schottky found it among the Servian fables. Rollenbagen, in his *Froschmauser*, speaks of it as the tale of the despised "Aschenpossel." Luther mentions it. It is in the Italian "Pentamerone" under the title of *Cenerentola*.

Boileau is mistaken in saying that Petrarch, " qui est regarde comme le pere du sonnet," borrowed it from the French or Provençal writers. The Italian sonnet can be traced back as far as the year 1200. Petrarch was not born until 1304.

Dante gives the name of "sonnet" to his little canzone, or ode, beginning

O voi che per la via d'Amor passate.

The lines

For he that fights and runs away  
May live to fight another day.  
But he that is in battle slain  
Will never rise to fight again,

are not to be found, as is thought, in *Hudibras*. Butler's verses ran thus:

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For he that flies may fight again,  
Which he can never do that 's slain.

The former are in a volume of *Poems* by Sir John Mennes, reign of Charles the Second. The original idea is in Demosthenes, Ἄνὴρ ὁ φεύγων καὶ πάλιν μαχήσεται.

The noble simile of Milton, of Satan with the rising sun, in the first book of the *Paradise Lost*, had nearly occasioned the suppression of that epic; it was supposed to contain a treasonable allusion.

Campbell's line,

Like angel visits, few and far between,

is a palpable plagiarism. Blair has

Its visits,

Like angel visits, short and far between.

The character of the ancient Bacchus, that graceful divinity, seems to have been but little understood by Dryden. The line in Virgil,

Et quocunque deus circum caput egit honestum,

is thus grossly mistranslated:

On whate'er side he turns his honest face.

Macrobius gives the form of an imprecation by which the Romans believed whole towns could be de-

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molished and armies defeated. It commences: "Dis Pater sive Jovis mavis sive quo alio nomine fas est nominare," and ends, "Si hæc ita faxitis ut ego sciam, sentiam, intelligamque, tum quisquis votum hoc faxit recte factum esto, ovibus atris tribus, Tellus mater, teque, Jupiter, obtestor."

*Courtier* of Baldazzar Castiglione, 1528, is the first attempt at periodical moral essay with which we are acquainted. The *Noctes Atticæ* of Aulus Gellius cannot be allowed to rank as such.

These lines were written over the closet-door of M. Menard:

Las d'espérer, et de me plaindre  
De l'amour, des grands, et du sort,  
C'est ici que j'attends la mort  
Sans la désirer ou la craindre.

Martin Luther, in his reply to Henry the Eighth's book, by which the latter acquired the title of "Defender of the Faith," calls the monarch very uncere- moniously "a pig, an ass, a dunghill, the spawn of an adder, a basilisk, a lying buffoon dressed in a king's robes, a mad fool with a frothy mouth and a whorish face."

An unshaped kind of something first appeared,  
is a line in Cowley's famous description of the Creation.

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*The Turkish Spy* is the original of many similar works, among the best of which are Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, and the *British Spy* of our own Wirt. It was written undoubtedly by John Paul Marana, an Italian, in Italian, but probably was first published in French. Dr. Johnson, who only saw an English translation, supposed it an English work. Marana died in 1693.

Corneille's celebrated *Moi of Medea* is borrowed from Seneca. Racine, in *Phædra*, has stolen nearly the whole scene of the declaration of love from the same puerile writer.

The peculiar zodiac of the comets is comprised in these verses of Cassini:

Antinous, Pegasusque, Andromeda, Taurus, Orion,  
Procyon, atque Hydrus, Centaurus, Scorpius, Arcus.

A religious hubbub, such as the world has seldom seen, was excited, during the reign of Frederick II., by the imagined virulence of a book entitled *The Three Impostors*. It was attributed to Pierre des Vignes, chancellor of the King, who was accused by the Pope of having treated the religions of Moses, Jesus, and Mahomet as political fables. The work in question, however, which was squabbled about, abused, defended, and familiarly quoted by all parties, is well proved never to have existed.



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Theophrastus, in his botanical works, anticipated the sexual system of Linnæus. Philolaus of Crotona maintained that comets appeared after a certain revolution, and Æcetes contended for the existence of what is now called the "New World." Pulci, *The Sire of the Half Serious Rhyme*, has a passage expressly alluding to a Western continent. Dante, two centuries before, has the same allusion :

De vostri sensi ch' è del rimanente  
Non vogilate negar l'esperenza,  
Diretro al sol, del mondo senza gente.

The *Lamentations of Jeremiah* are written, with the exception of the last chapter, in acrostic verse; that is to say, every line or couplet begins in alphabetical order with some letter in the Hebrew alphabet. In the third chapter each letter is repeated three times successively.

The fullest account of the Amazons is to be found in Diodorus Siculus.

Cicero makes *finis* masculine; Virgil, feminine. *Usque ad eum finem*—Cicero. *Quæ finis standi? Hæc finis Priami fatorum*—Virgil.

Dante left a poem in three languages—Latin, Provençal, and Italian. Rambaud de Vachieras left one in five.

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Marcus Antoninus wrote a book entitled *Τῶν ἐν ἑαυτῷ* (Of the things which concern himself). It would be a good title for a diary.

The stream flowing through the middle of the valley of Jehosaphat is called in the *Gospel of St. John* "the brook of cedars." In the Septuagint the word is *κέδρον* (darkness), from the Hebrew *kíddar* (black), and not *κεδρῶν* (of cedars).

Seneca says that Appion, a grammarian of the age of Caligula, maintained that Homer himself made the division of the *Ilíad* and *Odyssey* into books, and evidences the first word of the *Ilíad*, *Μῆνιν*, the *Μη* of which signifies 48, the number of books in both poems. Seneca, however, adds "Talia sciat oportet qui multa vult scire."

Hedelin, a Frenchman, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, denied that any such person as Homer ever existed, and supposed the *Ilíad* to be made up *ex tragediis, et variis canticis de trívio mendicatum et circulatorum*—à la manière des chansons du Port-neuf.

There are about one thousand lines identical in the *Ilíad* and *Odyssey*.

The shield of Achilles, in Homer, seems to have been

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copied from some pharos which the poet had seen in Egypt. What he describes on the central part of the shield is a map of the earth and of the celestial appearances.

Under a portrait of Tiberio Fiurelli, who invented the character of Scaramouch, are these verses :

Cet illustre Comédien  
De son art traca la carrière;  
Il fut le maître de Molière,  
Et la Nature fut le sien.

In Cary's *Dante*, the following passage :

And pilgrim newly on his road with love,  
Thrills if he hear the vesper bell from far,  
That seems to mourn for the expiring day.

Gray has also,

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.

Marmontel, in the *Encyclopédie*, declares that the Italians did not possess a single comedy worth reading, therein displaying his ignorance. Some of the greatest names in Italian literature were writers of comedy. Baretti mentions a collection of four thousand dramas made by Apostolo Leno, of which the greater part were comedies, many of a high order.

A comedy or opera by Andreini was the origin of

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*Paradise Lost*. Andreini's "Adamo" was the model of Milton's "Adam."

Milton has the expression, "Forget thyself to marble." Pope has the line, "I have not yet forgot myself to stone."

The most particular history of the Deluge, and the nearest of any to the account given by Moses, is to be found in Lucien (*De Dea Syria*).

The Greeks had no historian prior to Cadmus Milesius, nor any public inscription of which we can be certified before the laws of Draco.

So great is the uncertainty of ancient history that the epoch of Semiramis cannot be ascertained within 1535 years; for, according to

Syncellus, she lived before Christ	2177
Patavius       "       "       "	2060
Helvicus       "       "       "	2248
Eusebius       "       "       "	1984
Mr. Jackson       "       "	1964
Archbishop Usher       "       "	1215
Philo Byblius, from Sanchoniathon	1200
Herodotus about . . . .	713

An extract from *The Mystery of St. Dennis* is in the "Bibliothèque du Théâtre Française, depuis son origine, Dresde," 1768. In this serious drama, St. Den-

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nis, having been tortured and at length decapitated, rises very quietly, takes his head under his arm, and walks off the stage in all the dignity of martyrdom.

The idea of "No light, but rather darkness visible" was perhaps suggested to Milton by Spenser's

A little glooming light much like a shade.

Francis le Brossano engraved these verses upon a marble tomb which he erected to Petrarch at Arqua:

Frigida Francisci tegit hic lapis ossa Petrarcae.  
Suscipe, virgo parens, animam; sate virgine, parce,  
Fessaque jam terris, cœli requiescat in arce.

Bochart derives "Elysium" from the Phœnician *Elysoth* (joy), through the Greek *Ἠλύσιον*; "Circe" from the Phœnician *Kirkar* (to corrupt); "Siren," from the Phœnician *Sír* (to sing); "Scylla," from the Phœnician *Scol* (destruction); "Charybdis," from the Phœnician *Chorobdam* (chasm of ruin).

Of the ten tragedies which are attributed to Seneca (the only Roman tragedies extant), nine are on Greek subjects.

Voltaire's ignorance of antiquity is laughable. In his *Essay on Tragedy*, prefixed to *Brutus*, he actually boasts of having introduced the Roman senate on the stage in red mantles. "The Greeks," as he asserts,

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“font paraître ses acteurs [tragic] sur des espèces d'échasses, le visage couvert d'un masque qui exprime la douleur d'un côté et la joye de l'autre.” The only circumstance on which he could possibly have founded such an accusation is that in the new comedy masks were worn with one eyebrow drawn up and the other down, to denote a busybody or inquisitive meddler.

There is a book by a Jesuit, Père Labbe, entitled *La Bibliothèque des Bibliothèques* ; it is a catalogue of all authors in all nations who have written catalogues of books.

Lucretius, lib. v., 93, 96, has the words,

Terres—

Una dies dabit exitio ;

Ovid the lines,

Carmine sublimis tunc sunt peritura Lucretia,  
Exitio terras cum dabit una dies.

It is a remarkable fact that during the whole period of the Middle Ages, the Germans lived in utter ignorance of the art of writing.

A version of the *Psalms* in 1564, by Archbishop Parker, has the following :



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Who sticketh to God in stable trust,  
As Sion's mount he stands full just,  
Which moveth no whit, nor yet can reel,  
But standeth forever as stiff as steel.

A part of the 137th Psalm runs thus: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth," which has been thus paraphrased in a version of the *Psalms* :

If I forget thee ever,  
Then let me prosper never,  
But let it cause  
My tongue and jaws  
To cling and cleave together.

At the bottom of an obelisk which Pius VI. was erecting at great expense near the entrance of the Quirinal Palace in 1783, while the people were starving for bread, were found written these words:

"Signore, dia questa pietra chi divenga pane."  
("Lord, command that these stones be made bread.")





## Marginalia

**I**N getting my books, I have been always solicitous of an ample margin; this not so much through any love of the thing itself, however agreeable, as for the facility it affords me of pencilling suggested thoughts, agreements, and differences of opinion, or brief critical comments in general. Where what I have to note is too much to be included within the narrow limits of a margin, I commit it to a slip of paper, and deposit it between the leaves, taking care to secure it by an imperceptible portion of gum tragacanth paste.

All this may be whim; it may be not only a very hackneyed, but a very idle, practice; yet I persist in it still, and it affords me pleasure, which is profit, in despite of Mr. Bentham, with Mr. Mill on his back.

This making of notes, however, is by no means the making of mere memoranda, a custom which has its disadvantages, beyond doubt. "Ce que je mets sur papier," says Bernardin de St. Pierre, "je remets de ma

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mémoire, et par conséquence je l'oublie"; and, in fact, if you wish to forget anything on the spot, make a note that this thing is to be remembered.

But the purely marginal jottings, done with no eye to the memorandum-book, have a distinct complexion, and not only a distinct purpose, but none at all; this it is which imparts to them a value. They have a rank somewhat above the chance and desultory comments of literary chit-chat, for these latter are not unfrequently "talk for talk's sake," hurried out of the mouth; while the marginalia are deliberately pencilled, because the mind of the reader wishes to unburthen itself of a thought—however flippant, however silly, however trivial, still a thought; indeed not merely a thing that might have been a thought in time and under more favorable circumstances. In the marginalia, too, we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly, boldly, originally, with *abandonnement*, without conceit; much after the fashion of Jeremy Taylor, and Sir Thomas Browne, and Sir William Temple, and the anatomical Burton, and that most logical analogist, Butler, and some other people of the old day, who were too full of their matter to have any room for their manner, which, being thus left out of question, was a capital manner, indeed—a model of manners, with a richly marginalic air.

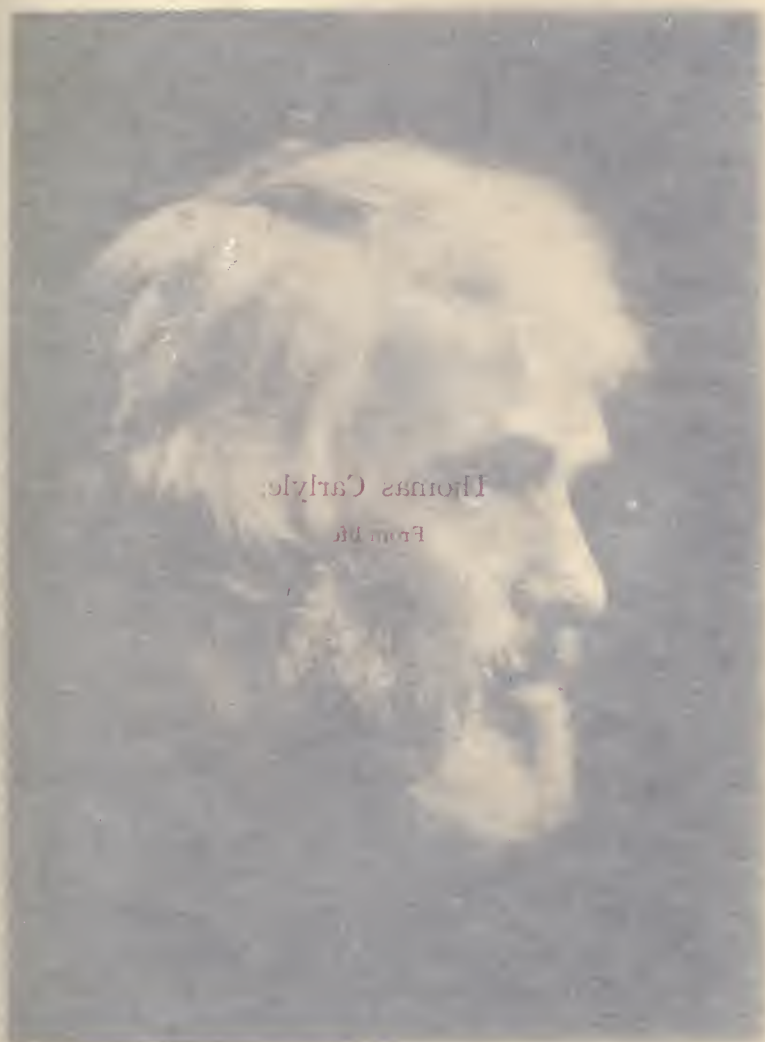
The circumscription of space, too, in these pencillings, has in it something more of advantage than

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inconvenience. It compels us (whatever diffuseness of idea we may clandestinely entertain) into Montesquieu-ism, into Tacitus-ism (here I leave out of view the concluding portion of the *Annals*), or even into Carlyle-ism, a thing which, I have been told, is not to be confounded with your ordinary affectation and bad grammar. I say "bad grammar," through sheer obstinacy, because the grammarians (who should know better) insist upon it that I should not. But then grammar is not what these grammarians will have it, and, being merely the analysis of language with the result of this analysis, must be good or bad just as the analyst is sage or silly, just as he is a Horne Tooke or a Cobbett.

But to our sheep. During a rainy afternoon, not long ago, being in a mood too listless for continuous study, I sought relief from *ennui* in dipping here and there, at random, among the volumes of my library—no very large one, certainly, but sufficiently miscellaneous, and, I flatter myself, not a little *recherché*.

Perhaps it was what the Germans call the "brain-scattering" humor of the moment; but, while the picturesqueness of the numerous pencil-scratches arrested my attention, their helter-skelteriness of commentary amused me. I found myself, at length, forming a wish that it had been some other hand than my own which had so bedevilled the books, and fancying that, in such case, I might have derived no inconsider-



Thomas Carlyle

From life



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able pleasure from turning them over. From this the transition-thought (as Mr. Lyell, or Mr. Murchison, or Mr. Featherstonhaugh would have it) was natural enough: there might be something even in my scribblings which, for the mere sake of scribbling, would have interest for others.

The main difficulty respected the mode of transferring the notes from the volumes, the context from the text, without detriment to that exceedingly frail fabric of intelligibility in which the context was imbedded. With all appliances to boot, with the printed pages at their back, the commentaries were too often like Dodona's oracles, or those of Lycophron Tenebrosus, or the essays of the pedant's pupils in Quintilian, which were "necessarily excellent, since even he (the pedant) found it impossible to comprehend them"; what, then, would become of it — this context — if transferred? if translated? Would it not rather be *traduit* (translated), which is the French synonyme, or *overzezet* (turned topsy-turvy), which is the Dutch one?

I concluded, at length, to put extensive faith in the acumen and imagination of the reader;—this as a general rule. But, in some instances, where even faith would not remove mountains, there seemed no safer plan than so to remodel the note as to convey at least the ghost of a conception as to what it was all about. Where, for such conception, the text itself was absolutely necessary, I could quote it; where the title of

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the book commented upon was indispensable, I could name it. In short, like a novel-hero dilemma'd, I made up my mind "to be guided by circumstances," in default of more satisfactory rules of conduct.

As for the multitudinous opinion expressed in the subjoined farrago; as for my present assent to all, or dissent from any portion of it; as to the possibility of my having, in some instances, altered my mind, or as to the impossibility of my not having altered it often,—these are points upon which I say nothing, because upon these there can be nothing cleverly said. It may be as well to observe, however, that just as the goodness of your true pun is in the direct ratio of its intolerability, so is nonsense the essential sense of the Marginal Note.

### I

One of the happiest examples, in a small way, of the carrying-one's-self-in-a-hand-basket logic, is to be found in a London weekly paper called *The Popular Record of Modern Science: A Journal of Philosophy and General Information*. This work has a vast circulation, and is respected by eminent men. Some time in November, 1845, it copied from the *Columbian Magazine*, of New York, a rather adventurous article of mine, called *Mesmeric Revelation*. It had the impudence, also, to spoil the title by improving it to *The Last Conversation of a Somnambule*, a phrase that is

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nothing at all to the purpose, since the person who "converses" is not a somnambule. He is a sleep-waker, not a sleep-walker; but I presume that the *Record* thought it was only the difference of an *l*. What I chiefly complain of, however, is that the London editor prefaced my paper with these words: "The following is an article communicated to the *Columbian Magazine*, a journal of respectability and influence in the United States, by Mr. Edgar A. Poe. It bears internal evidence of authenticity!" There is no subject under heaven about which funnier ideas are in general entertained than about this subject of internal evidence. It is by "internal evidence," observe, that we decide upon the mind. But to the *Record*; On the issue of my *Valdemar Case*, this journal copies it, as a matter of course, and (also as a matter of course) improves the title, as in the previous instance. But the editorial comments may as well be called profound. Here they are:

"The following narrative appears in a recent number of the *American Magazine*, a respectable periodical in the United States. It comes, it will be observed, from the narrator of the *Last Conversation of a Somnambule*, published in the *Record* of the 29th of November. In extracting this case, the *Morning Post*, of Monday last, takes what it considers the safe side, by remarking: 'For our own parts we do not believe it; and



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there are several statements made, more especially with regard to the disease of which the patient died, which at once prove the case to be either a fabrication, or the work of one little acquainted with consumption. The story, however, is wonderful, and we therefore give it.' The editor, however, does not point out the especial statements which are inconsistent with what we know of the progress of consumption; and as few scientific persons would be willing to take their pathology any more than their logic from the *Morning Post*, his caution, it is to be feared, will not have much weight. The reason assigned by the *Post* for publishing the account is quaint, and would apply equally to an adventure from *Baron Munchausen* :—' It is wonderful, and we therefore give it.' . . . The above case is obviously one that cannot be received except on the strongest testimony, and it is equally clear that the testimony by which it is at present accompanied is not of that character. The most favorable circumstances in support of it consist in the fact that credence is understood to be given to it at New York, within a few miles of which city the affair took place, and where consequently the most ready means must be found for its authentication or disproof. The initials of the medical men and of the young medical student must be sufficient, in the immediate locality, to establish their identity, especially as M. Valdemar was well known, and had been so long ill as to render it out of the question



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that there should be any difficulty in ascertaining the names of the physicians by whom he had been attended. In the same way the nurses and servants, under whose cognizance the case must have come during the seven months which it occupied, are of course accessible to all sorts of inquiries. It will, therefore, appear that there must have been too many parties concerned to render prolonged deception practicable. The angry excitement and various rumors which have at length rendered a public statement necessary are also sufficient to show that something extraordinary must have taken place. On the other hand, there is no strong point for disbelief. The circumstances are, as the *Post* says, 'wonderful'; but so are all circumstances that come to our knowledge for the first time, and in mesmerism everything is new. An objection may be made that the article has rather a magazinish air, Mr. Poe having evidently written with a view to effect, and so as to excite rather than to subdue the vague appetite for the mysterious and the horrible which such a case, under any circumstances, is sure to awaken; but apart from this there is nothing to deter a philosophic mind from further inquiries regarding it. It is a matter entirely for testimony. [So it is.] Under this view we shall take steps to procure from some of the most intelligent and influential citizens of New York all the evidence that can be had upon the subject. No steamer will leave England for America till the 3d of

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February, but within a few weeks of that time we doubt not it will be possible to lay before the readers of the *Record* information which will enable them to come to a pretty accurate conclusion."

Yes; and no doubt they came to one accurate enough, in the end. But all this rigmarole is what people call testing a thing by "internal evidence." The *Record* insists upon the truth of the story because of certain facts,—because "the initials of the young men must be sufficient to establish their identity"; because "the nurses must be accessible to all sorts of inquiries"; and because the "angry excitement and various rumors which at length rendered a public statement necessary are sufficient to show that something extraordinary must have taken place." To be sure! The story is proved by these facts,—the facts about the students, the nurses, the excitement, the credence given the tale in New York. And now all we have to do is to prove these facts. Ah! they are proved by the story. As for the *Morning Post*, it evinces more weakness in its disbelief than the *Record* in its credulity. What the former says about doubting on account of inaccuracy in the details of the phthisical symptoms is a mere "fetch," as the Cockneys have it, in order to make a very few little children believe that it, the *Post*, is not quite so stupid as a post proverbially is. It knows nearly as much about pathology as it does about Eng-

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lish grammar, and I really hope it will not feel called upon to blush at the compliment. I represented the symptoms of M. Valdemar as "severe," to be sure. I put an extreme case; for it was necessary that I should leave on the reader's mind no doubt as to the certainty of death without the aid of the mesmerist; but such symptoms might have appeared, the identical symptoms have appeared, and will be presented again and again. Had the *Post* been only half as honest as ignorant, it would have owned that it disbelieved for no reason more profound than that which influences all dunces in disbelieving,—it would have owned that it doubted the thing merely because the thing was a "wonderful" thing, and had never yet been printed in a book.

### II

We mere men of the world, with no principle—a very old-fashioned and cumbersome thing—should be on our guard lest, fancying him on his last legs, we insult or otherwise maltreat some poor devil of a genius at the very instant of his putting his foot on the top round of his ladder of triumph. It is a common trick with these fellows, when on the point of attaining some long-cherished end, to sink themselves into the deepest possible abyss of seeming despair, for no other purpose than that of increasing the space of success through which they have made up their minds immediately to soar.

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### III

Mr. Hudson, among innumerable blunders, attributes to Sir Thomas Browne the paradox of Tertullian in his *De Carne Christi*: "Mortuus est Dei filius, credibile est quia ineptum est; et sepultus resurrexit, certum est quia impossibile est."

### IV

After reading all that has been written, and after thinking all that can be thought, on the topics of God and the soul, the man who has a right to say that he thinks at all will find himself face to face with the conclusion that, on these topics, the most profound thought is that which can be the least easily distinguished from the most superficial sentiment.

### V

That punctuation is important all agree; but how few comprehend the extent of its importance! The writer who neglects punctuation, or mispunctuates, is liable to be misunderstood; this, according to the popular idea, is the sum of the evils arising from heedlessness or ignorance. It does not seem to be known that, even where the sense is perfectly clear, a sentence may be deprived of half its force, its spirit, its point, by improper punctuations. For the want of merely a comma, it often occurs that an axiom appears a paradox, or that a sarcasm is converted into a ser-

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monoid. There is no treatise on the topic, and there is no topic on which a treatise is more needed. There seems to exist a vulgar notion that the subject is one of pure conventionality, and cannot be brought within the limits of intelligible and consistent rule. And yet, if fairly looked in the face, the whole matter is so plain that its rationale may be read as we run. If not anticipated, I shall, hereafter, make an attempt at a magazine paper on "The Philosophy of Point." In the meantime let me say a word or two of the dash. Every writer for the press, who has any sense of the accurate, must have been frequently mortified and vexed at the distortion of his sentences by the printer's now general substitution of a semicolon or comma for the dash of the MS. The total or nearly total disuse of the latter point has been brought about by the revulsion consequent upon its excessive employment about twenty years ago. The Byronic poets were all dash. John Neal, in his earlier novels, exaggerated its use into the grossest abuse, although his very error arose from the philosophical and self-dependent spirit which has always distinguished him, and which will even yet lead him, if I am not greatly mistaken in the man, to do something for the literature of the country which the country "will not willingly," and cannot possibly, "let die." Without entering now into the why, let me observe that the printer may always ascertain when the dash of the MS. is properly and when improperly



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employed by bearing in mind that this point represents a second thought—an emendation. In using it just above I have exemplified its use. The words, “an emendation,” are, speaking with reference to grammatical construction, put in apposition with the words “a second thought.” Having written these latter words, I reflected whether it would not be possible to render their meaning more distinct by certain other words. Now, instead of erasing the phrase, “a second thought,” which is of some use, which partially conveys the idea intended—which advances me a step toward my full purpose,—I suffer it to remain, and merely put a dash between it and the phrase, “an emendation.” The dash gives the reader a choice between two, or among three or more expressions, one of which may be more forcible than another, but all of which help out the idea. It stands, in general, for these words, “or, to make my meaning more distinct.” This force it has, and this force no other point can have; since all other points have well-understood uses quite different from this. Therefore the dash cannot be dispensed with. It has its phases, its variation of the force described; but the one principle—that of second thought or emendation—will be found at the bottom of all.

### VI

Diana's Temple at Ephesus having been burnt on the night in which Alexander was born, some person



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observed that "it was no wonder, since, at the period of the conflagration, she was gossiping at Pella." Cicero commends this as a witty conceit, Plutarch condemns it as senseless; and this is the one point in which I agree with the biographer.

### VII

Until we analyze a religion or a philosophy in respect of its inducements, independently of its rationality, we shall never be in condition to estimate that religion or that philosophy by the mere number of its adherents: unluckily,

No Indian Prince has to his palace  
More followers than a thief to the gallows.

### VIII

"If in any point," says Lord Bacon, "I have receded from what is commonly received, it hath been for the purpose of proceeding *melius* and not in *aliud*"; but the character assumed, in general, by modern "Reform" is simply that of Opposition.

### IX

A strong argument for the religion of Christ is this: that offences against Charity are about the only ones which men on their death-beds can be made, not to understand, but to feel, as crime.

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### X

The effect derivable from well-managed rhyme is very imperfectly understood. Conventionally "rhyme" implies merely close similarity of sound at the ends of verse, and it is really curious to observe how long mankind have been content with their limitation of the idea. What, in rhyme, first and principally pleases, may be referred to the human sense or appreciation of equality, the common element, as might be easily shown, of all the gratification we derive from music in its most extended sense, very especially in its modifications of metre and rhythm. We see, for example, a crystal, and are immediately interested by the equality between the sides and angles of one of its faces; but on bringing to view a second face, in all respects similar to the first, our pleasure seems to be squared; on bringing to view a third, it appears to be cubed, and so on. I have no doubt, indeed, that the delight experienced, if measurable, would be found to have exact mathematical relations such, or nearly such, as I suggest; that is to say, as far as a certain point, beyond which there would be a decrease, in similar relations. Now here, as the ultimate result of analysis, we reach the sense of mere equality, or rather the human delight in this sense; and it was an instinct, rather than a clear comprehension of this delight as a principle, which, in the first instance, led the poet to attempt an increase of the

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effect arising from the mere similarity, that is to say, equality, between two sounds,—led him, I say, to attempt increasing the effect by making a secondary equalization in placing the rhymes at equal distances; that is, at the ends of lines of equal length. In this manner rhyme and the termination of the line grew connected in men's thoughts,—grew into a conventionalism, the principle being lost sight of altogether. And it was simply because Pindaric verses had, before this epoch, existed—i. e., verses of unequal length—that rhymes were subsequently found at unequal distances. It was for this reason solely, I say,—for none more profound. Rhyme had come to be regarded as of right appertaining to the end of verse; and here we complain that the matter has finally rested. But it is clear that there was much more to be considered. So far, the sense of equality alone entered the effect; or, if this equality was slightly varied, it was varied only through an accident—the accident of the existence of Pindaric metres. It will be seen that the rhymes were always anticipated. The eye, catching the end of a verse, whether long or short, expected, for the ear, a rhyme. The great element of unexpectedness was not dreamed of, that is to say, of novelty, of originality. “But,” says Lord Bacon (how justly!), “there is no exquisite beauty without some strangeness in the proportions.” Take away this element of strangeness, of unexpectedness, of novelty, of originality—call it what

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we will—and all that is ethereal in loveliness is lost at once. We lose, we miss the unknown, the vague, the uncomprehended, because offered before we have time to examine and comprehend. We lose, in short, all that assimilates the beauty of earth with what we dream of the beauty of heaven. Perfection of rhyme is attainable only in the combination of the two elements, equality and unexpectedness. But as evil cannot exist without good, so unexpectedness must arise from expectedness. We do not contend for mere arbitrariness of rhyme. In the first place, we must have equidistant or regularly recurring rhymes to form the basis, expectedness, out of which arises the element, unexpectedness, by the introduction of rhymes, not arbitrarily, but with an eye to the greatest amount of unexpectedness. We should not introduce them, for example, at such points that the entire line is a multiple of the syllables preceding the points. When, for instance, I write,

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain,  
I produce more, to be sure, but not remarkably more, than the ordinary effect of rhymes regularly recurring at the ends of lines; for the number of syllables in the whole verse is merely a multiple of the number of syllables preceding the rhyme introduced at the middle, and there is still left, therefore, a certain degree of expectedness. What there is of the element, unex-

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pectedness, is addressed, in fact, to the eye only; for the ear divides the verse into two ordinary lines, thus:

And the silken, sad, uncertain  
Rustling of each purple curtain.

I obtain, however, the whole effect of unexpectedness, when I write,

Thrilled me, filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before.

N. B.—It is very commonly supposed that rhyme, as it now ordinarily exists, is of modern invention; but see the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. Hebrew verse, however, did not include it, the terminations of the lines, where most distinct, never showing anything of the kind.

## XI

Paulus Jovius, living in those benighted times when diamond-pointed styluses were as yet unknown, thought proper, nevertheless, to speak of his goose-quill as "*aliquando ferreus, aureus aliquando*," intending, of course, a mere figure of speech; and from the class of modern authors who use really nothing to write with but steel and gold, some, no doubt, will let their pens, vice versa, descend to posterity under the designation of "*anserine*," of course, intending always a mere figure of speech.

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### XII

The Carlyle-ists should adopt, as a motto, the inscription on the old bell from whose metal was cast the Great Tom, of Oxford: "In Thomæ laude resono 'Bim! Bom!' sine fraude"; and "Bim! Bom!" in such case would be a marvellous "echo of sound to sense."

### XIII

An infinity of error makes its way into our philosophy through man's habit of considering himself a citizen of a world solely, of an individual planet, instead of at least occasionally contemplating his position as cosmopolite proper, as a denizen of the universe.

### XIV

Talking of puns: "Why do they not give us quail for dinner, as usual?" demanded Count Fessis, the other day, of H——, the classicist and sportsman.

"Because at this season," replied H——, who was dozing, "qualis sopor fessis" (Quail is so poor, Fessis).

### XV

The German *Schwärmerei*—not exactly "humbug," but "sky-rocketing"—seems to be the only term by which we can conveniently designate that peculiar style of criticism which has lately come into



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fashion, through the influence of certain members of the Fabian family—people who live (upon beans) about Boston.

### XVI

Some Frenchman, possibly Montaigne, says: "People talk about thinking, but for my part I never think, except when I sit down to write." It is this never thinking, unless when we sit down to write, which is the cause of so much indifferent composition. But perhaps there is something more involved in the Frenchman's observation than meets the eye. It is certain that the mere act of inditing tends, in a great degree, to the localization of thought. Whenever, on account of its vagueness, I am dissatisfied with a conception of the brain, I resort forthwith to the pen, for the purpose of obtaining, through its aid, the necessary form, consequence, and precision.

How very commonly we hear it remarked that such and such thoughts are beyond the compass of words! I do not believe that any thought, properly so called, is out of the reach of language. I fancy, rather, that where difficulty in expression is experienced, there is, in the intellect which experiences it, a want either of deliberateness or of method. For my own part I have never had a thought which I could not set down in words with even more distinctness than that with which I conceived it; as I have before observed, the

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thought is logicalized by the effort at (written) expression. There is, however, a class of fancies of exquisite delicacy, which are not thoughts, and to which, as yet, I have found it absolutely impossible to adapt language. I use the word "fancies" at random, and merely because I must use some word; but the idea commonly attached to the term is not even remotely applicable to the shadows of shadows in question. They seem to me rather psychal than intellectual. They arise in the soul (alas, how rarely!) only at its epochs of most intense tranquillity, when the bodily and mental health are in perfection, and at those mere points of time where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the world of dreams. I am aware of these "fancies" only when I am upon the very brink of sleep, with the consciousness that I am so. I have satisfied myself that this condition exists but for an inappreciable point of time, yet it is crowded with these "shadows of shadows"; and for absolute thought there is demanded time's endurance. These "fancies" have in them a pleasurable ecstasy, as far beyond the most pleasurable of the world of wakefulness or of dreams as the heaven of the Northman theology is beyond its hell. I regard the visions, even as they arise, with an awe which, in some measure, moderates or tranquillizes the ecstasy; I so regard them through a conviction (which seems a portion of the ecstasy itself) that this ecstasy, in itself, is of a character su-

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pernal to the human nature—is a glimpse of the spirit's outer world; and I arrive at this conclusion, if this term is at all applicable to instantaneous intuition, by a perception that the delight experienced has, as its element, but the absoluteness of novelty. I say the "absoluteness," for in these fancies—let me now term them psychal impressions—there is really nothing even approximate in character to impressions ordinarily received. It is as if the five senses were supplanted by five myriad others alien to mortality.

Now, so entire is my faith in the power of words, that, at times, I have believed it possible to embody even the evanescence of fancies such as I have attempted to describe. In experiments with this end in view, I have proceeded so far as, first, to control (when the bodily and mental health are good) the existence of the condition; that is to say, I can now (unless when ill) be sure that the condition will supervene, if I so wish it, at the point of time already described; of its supervention, until lately, I could never be certain, even under the most favorable circumstances. I mean to say, merely, that now I can be sure, when all circumstances are favorable, of the supervention of the condition, and feel even the capacity of inducing or compelling it; the favorable circumstances, however, are not the less rare, else had I compelled, already, the heaven into the earth.

I have proceeded so far, secondly, as to prevent the

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lapse from the point of which I speak, the point of blending between wakefulness and sleep,—as to prevent at will, I say, the lapse from this border-ground into the dominion of sleep. Not that I can continue the condition, not that I can render the point more than a point, but that I can startle myself from the point into wakefulness, and thus transfer the point itself into the realm of memory; convey its impressions, or more properly their recollections, to a situation where (although still for a very brief period) I can survey them with the eye of analysis. For these reasons, that is to say, because I have been enabled to accomplish thus much, I do not altogether despair of embodying in words at least enough of the fancies in question to convey to certain classes of intellect a shadowy conception of their character. In saying this I am not to be understood as supposing that the fancies, or psychal impressions, to which I allude, are confined to my individual self—are not, in a word, common to all mankind, for on this point it is quite impossible that I should form an opinion; but nothing can be more certain than that even a partial record of the impressions would startle the universal intellect of mankind by the supremeness of the novelty of the material employed, and of its consequent suggestions. In a word, should I ever write a paper on this topic, the world will be compelled to acknowledge that, at last, I have done an original thing.

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### XVII

In the way of original, striking, and well-sustained metaphor, we can call to mind few finer things than this, to be found in James Puckle's *Gray Cap for a Green Head*: "In speaking of the dead, so fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are wrapped up in silence."

### XVIII

Talking of inscriptions, how admirable was the one circulated at Paris, for the equestrian statue of Louis XV., done by Pigal and Bouchardon: "Statua Statuæ."

### XIX

"This is right," says Epicurus, "precisely because the people are displeased with it."

"Il y a à parier," says Chamfort, one of the Kamkars of Mirabeau, "que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre."

"Si proficere cupis," says the great African bishop, "primo id verum puta quod sana mens omnium hominum attestatur."

Now,

Who shall decide where Doctors disagree?

To me it appears that in all ages the most preposterous falsities have been received as truths by at least the

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*mens omnium hominum.* As for the *sana mens*, how are we ever to determine what that is ?

### XX

This book<sup>1</sup> could never have been popular out of Germany. It is too simple, too direct, too obvious, too bold, not sufficiently complex, to be relished by any people who have thoroughly passed the first (or impulsive) epoch of literary civilization. The Germans have not yet passed this first epoch. It must be remembered that during the whole of the Middle Ages they lived in utter ignorance of the art of writing. From so total a darkness of so late a date, they could not, as a nation, have as yet fully emerged into the second or critical epoch. Individual Germans have been critical in the best sense, but the masses are unleavened. Literary Germany thus presents the singular spectacle of the impulsive spirit surrounded by the critical, and, of course, in some measure influenced thereby. England, for example, has advanced far, and France much farther, into the critical epoch; and their effect on the German mind is seen in the wildly anomalous condition of the German literature at large. That this latter will be improved by age, however, should never be maintained. As the impulsive spirit subsides, and the critical uprises, there

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<sup>1</sup> *Thiodolf the Iclander, and Aslauga's Knight* No. 60 of Wiley & Putnam's Foreign Series of "The Library of Choice Reading."



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will appear the polished insipidity of the later England, or that ultimate throes of taste which has found its best exemplification in Sue. At present the German literature resembles no other on the face of the earth, for it is the result of certain conditions which, before this individual instance of their fulfilment, have never been fulfilled. And this anomalous state to which I refer is the source of our anomalous criticism upon what that state produces; is the source of the grossly conflicting opinions about German letters. For my own part, I admit the German vigor, the German directness, boldness, imagination, and some other qualities of impulse, just as I am willing to admit and admire these qualities in the first (or impulsive) epochs of British and French letters. At the German criticism, however, I cannot refrain from laughing all the more heartily, all the more seriously I hear it praised. Not that, in detail, it affects me as an absurdity, but in the adaptation of its details. It abounds in brilliant bubbles of suggestion, but these rise and sink and jostle each other, until the whole vortex of thought in which they originate is one indistinguishable chaos of froth. The German criticism is unsettled, and can only be settled by time. At present it suggests without demonstrating, or convincing, or affecting any definite purpose under the sun. We read it, rub our foreheads, and ask "What then?" I am not ashamed to say that I prefer even Voltaire to Goethe, and hold Macau-

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lay to possess more of the true critical spirit than Augustus William and Frederick Schlegel combined. *Thiodolf* is called by Fouqué his "most successful work." He would not have spoken thus had he considered it his best. It is admirable of its kind, but its kind can never be appreciated by Americans. It will affect them much as would a grasp of the hand from a man of ice. Even the exquisite *Undine* is too chilly for our people, and, generally, for our epoch. We have less imagination and warmer sympathies than the age which preceded us. It would have done Fouqué more ready and fuller justice than ours. Has any one remarked the striking similarity in tone between *Undine* and the *Libussa* of Musæus?

### XXI

What can be more soothing, at once to a man's pride and to his conscience, than the conviction that, in taking vengeance on his enemies for injustice done him, he has simply to do them justice in return?

### XXII

Bielfeld, the author of *Les Premiers Traits de l'Érudition Universelle*, defines poetry as "l'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction." The Germans have two words in full accordance with this definition, absurd as it is—the terms *Dichtkunst* (the art of fiction), and

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*dichten* (to feign)—which are generally used for poetry and to make verses.

### XXIII

Brown, in his *Amusements*, speaks of having transfused the blood of an ass into the veins of an astrological quack; and there can be no doubt that one of Hague's progenitors was the man.

### XXIV

The chief portion of Professor Espy's theory has been anticipated by Roger Bacon.

### XXV

Whatever may be the merits or demerits, generally, of the magazine literature of America, there can be no question as to its extent or influence. The topic, Magazine Literature, is therefore an important one. In a few years its importance will be found to have increased in geometrical ratio. The whole tendency of the age is magazineward. The Quarterly Reviews have never been popular. Not only are they too stilted (by way of keeping up a due dignity), but they make a point, with the same end in view, of discussing only topics which are caviare to the many, and which, for the most part, have only a conventional interest even with the few. Their issues, also, are at too long intervals; their subjects get cold before being served

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up. In a word, their ponderosity is quite out of keeping with the rush of the age. We now demand the light artillery of the intellect; we need the curt, the condensed, the pointed, the readily diffused, in place of the verbose, the detailed, the voluminous, the inaccessible. On the other hand, the lightness of the artillery should not degenerate into pop-gunnery—by which term we may designate the character of the greater portion of the newspaper press, their sole legitimate object being the discussion of ephemeral matters in an ephemeral manner. Whatever talent may be brought to bear upon our daily journals, and in many cases this talent is very great, still the imperative necessity of catching, *currente calamo*, each topic as it flits before the eye of the public, must of course materially narrow the limits of their power. The bulk and the period of issue of the monthly magazines seem to be precisely adapted, if not to all the literary wants of the day, at least to the largest and most imperative as well as the most consequential portion of them.

### XXVI

My friend —— can never commence what he fancies a poem (he is a fanciful man, after all) without first elaborately “invoking the Muses.” Like so many she-dogs of John of Nivelles, however, the more he invokes them, the more they decline obeying the invocation.

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### XXVII

The nose of a mob is its imagination. By this, at any time, it can be quietly led.

### XXVIII

There lies a deep and sealèd well  
Within yon leafy forest hid,  
Whose pent and lonely waters swell  
Its confines chill and drear amid.

This putting the adjective after the noun is merely an inexcusable Gallicism; but the putting the preposition after the noun is alien to all language, and in opposition to all its principles. Such things, in general, serve only to betray the versifier's poverty of resource; and when an inversion of this kind occurs we say to ourselves, "Here the poet lacked the skill to make out his line without distorting the natural or colloquial order of the words." Now and then, however, we must refer the error not to deficiency of skill, but to something far less defensible—to an idea that such things belong to the essence of poetry; that it needs them to distinguish it from prose; that we are poetical, in a word, very much in the ratio of our unprosaicalness at these points. Even while employing the phrase "poetic license," a phrase which has to answer for an infinity of sins, people who think in this way seem to have an indistinct conviction that the

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license in question involves a necessity of being adopted. The true artist will avail himself of no "license" whatever. The very word will disgust him, for it says: "Since you seem unable to manage without these peccadillo advantages, you must have them, I suppose; and the world, half-shutting its eyes, will do its best not to see the awkwardness which they stamp upon your poem."

Few things have greater tendency than inversion to render verse feeble and ineffective. In most cases where a line is spoken of as "forcible," the force may be referred to directness of expression. A vast majority of the passages which have become household through frequent quotation, owe their popularity either to this directness, or, in general, to the scorn of "poetic license." In short, as regards verbal construction, the more prosaic a poetical style is, the better. Through this species of prosaicism, Cowper, with scarcely one of the higher poetical elements, came very near making his age fancy him the equal of Pope; and to the same cause are attributable three fourths of that unusual point and force for which Moore is distinguished. It is the prosaicism of these two writers to which is owing their especial quotability.

### XXIX

The Reverend Arthur Coxe's *Saul: A Mystery*, having been condemned in no measured terms by Poe, of



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the *Broadway Journal*, and Green, of *The Emporium*,  
a writer in the *Hartford Columbian* retorts as follows:

An entertaining history,  
Entitled *Saul: A Mystery*,  
Has recently been published by the Reverend Arthur Coxe.  
The poem is dramatic,  
And the wit of it is Attic,  
And its teachings are emphatic of the doctrines orthodox.

But Mr. Poe, the poet,  
Declares he cannot go it—  
That the book is very stupid, or something of that sort:  
And Green, of the *Emporium*,  
Um, tells a kindred story,  
And swears like any tory that it is n't worth a groat.

But maugre all the croaking  
Of the *Raven* and the joking  
Of the verdant little fellow of the used-to-be Review,  
The People, in derision  
Of their impudent decision,  
Have declared, without division, that the *Mystery* will do.

The truth, of course, rather injures an epigram than otherwise; and nobody will think the worse of the one above, when I say that, at the date of its first appearance, I had expressed no opinion whatever of the poem to which it refers. "Give a dog a bad name," etc. Whenever a book is abused, people take it for granted that it is I who have been abusing it.

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Latterly I have read *Saul*, and agree with the epigrammatist, that it "will do," whoever attempts to wade through it. It will do, also, for trunk paper. The author is right in calling it *A Mystery*, for a most unfathomable mystery it is. When I got to the end of it, I found it more mysterious than ever, and it was really a mystery how I ever did get to the end, which I half fancied that somebody had cut off, in a fit of ill-will to the critics. I have heard not a syllable about the *Mystery*, of late days. "The People" seem to have forgotten it, and Mr. Coxe's friends should advertise it under the head of "Mysterious Disappearance," that is to say, the disappearance of a *Mystery*.

### XXX

The *vox populi*, so much talked about to so little purpose, is, possibly, that very *vox et preterea nihil* which the countryman in Catullus mistook for a nightingale.

### XXXI

The pure imagination chooses, from either beauty or deformity, only the most combinable things hitherto uncombined; the compound, as a general rule, partaking, in character of beauty or sublimity, in the ratio of the respective beauty or sublimity of the things combined, which are themselves still to be considered as atomic, that is to say, as previous combinations. But, as often analogously happens in physical chemis-

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try, so not unfrequently does it occur in this chemistry of the intellect, that the admixture of two elements results in a something that has nothing of the qualities of one of them, or even nothing of the qualities of either. . . . Thus the range of imagination is unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. Even out of deformities it fabricates that beauty which is at once its sole object and its inevitable test. But, in general, the richness or force of the matters combined, the facility of discovering combinable novelties worth combining, and, especially, the absolute "chemical combination" of the completed mass, are the particulars to be regarded in our estimate of imagination. It is this thorough harmony of an imaginative work which so often causes it to be undervalued by the thoughtless, through the character of obviousness which is superinduced. We are apt to find ourselves asking why it is that these combinations have never been imagined before.

### XXXII

In examining trivial details, we are apt to overlook essential generalities. Thus M——, in making a to-do about the "typographical mistakes" in his book, has permitted the printer to escape a scolding which he did richly deserve,—a scolding for a "typographical mistake" of really vital importance,—the mistake of having printed the book at all.

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### XXXIII

It has been well said of the French orator, Dupin, that " he spoke, as nobody else, the language of everybody "; and thus his manner seems to be exactly conversed in that of the Frogpondian Euphuists, who, on account of the familiar tone in which they lisp their *outré* phrases, may be said to speak, as everybody, the language of nobody; that is to say, a language emphatically their own.

### XXXIV

" He [Bulwer] is the most accomplished writer of the most accomplished era of English Letters, practising all styles and classes of composition, and eminent in all—novelist, dramatist, poet, historian, moral philosopher, essayist, critic, political pamphleteer—in each superior to all others, and only rivalled in each by himself."—WARD, author of *Tremaïne*.

The " only rivalled in each by himself " here puts me in mind of

None but himself can be his parallel.

But surely Mr. Ward (who, although he did write *De Vere*, is by no means a fool) could never have put to paper, in his sober senses, anything so absurd as the paragraph quoted above without stopping at every third word to hold his sides, or thrust his pocket-hand-

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kerchief into his mouth. If the serious intention be insisted upon, however, I have to remark that the opinion is the mere opinion of a writer remarkable for no other good trait than his facility at putting his readers to sleep according to rules Addisonian, and with the least possible loss of labor and time. But as the mere opinion of even a Jeffrey or a Macaulay, I have an inalienable right to meet it with another.

As a novelist, then, Bulwer is far more than respectable; although generally inferior to Scott, Godwin, D'Israeli, Miss Burney, Sue, Dumas, Dickens, the author of *Ellen Wareham*, and the author of *Jane Eyre*, and several others. From the list of foreign novels I could select a hundred which he could neither have written nor conceived. As a dramatist, he deserves more credit, although he receives less. His *Richelieu*, *Money*, and *Lady of Lyons* have done much in the way of opening the public eyes to the true value of what is superciliously termed "stage effect" in the hands of one able to manage it. But if commendable at this point, his dramas fail egregiously in points more important; so that, upon the whole, he can be said to have written a good play only when we think of him in connection with the still more contemptible "old-dramatist" imitators who are his contemporaries and friends. As historian, he is sufficiently dignified, sufficiently ornate, and more than sufficiently self-sufficient. His *Athens* would have received an Etonian



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prize, and has all the happy air of an Etonian prize essay revamped. His political pamphlets are very good as political pamphlets, and very disreputable as anything else. His essays leave no doubt upon anybody's mind that, with the writer, they have been essays indeed. His criticism is really beneath contempt. His moral philosophy is the most ridiculous of all the modern philosophies that ever have been imagined upon earth.

"The men of sense," says Helvetius, "those idols of the unthinking, are very far inferior to the men of passions. It is the strong passions which, rescuing us from sloth, can alone impart to us that continuous and earnest attention necessary to great intellectual efforts."

When the Swiss philosopher here speaks of "inferiority," he refers to inferiority in worldly success; by "men of sense" he intends indolent men of genius. And Bulwer is, emphatically, one of the "men of passions" contemplated in the apothegm. His passions, with opportunities, have made him what he is. Urged by a rabid ambition to do much, in doing nothing he would merely have proved himself an idiot. Something he has done. In aiming at Crichton, he has hit the target an inch or two above Harrison Ainsworth. Not to such intellects belong the honors of universality. His works bear about them the unmistakable indications of mere talent—talent, I grant, of an unusual



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order, and nurtured to its extreme of development with a very tender and elaborate care. Nevertheless, it is talent still. Genius it is not.

And the proof is, that while we often fancy ourselves about to be enkindled beneath its influence, fairly enkindled we never are. That Bulwer is no poet follows as a corollary from what has been already said; for to speak of a poet without genius is merely to put forth a flat contradiction in terms.

### XXXV

In the tale proper, where there is no space for development of character or for great profusion and variety of incident, mere construction is, of course, far more imperatively demanded than in the novel. Defective plot, in this latter, may escape observation, but, in the tale, never. Most of our tale-writers, however, neglect the distinction. They seem to begin their stories without knowing how they are to end; and their ends, generally, like so many governments of Trinculo, appear to have forgotten their beginnings.

### XXXVI

Quaintness, within reasonable limits, is not only not to be regarded as affectation, but has its proper uses in aiding a fantastic effect. Miss Barrett will afford me two examples. In some lines to a dog, she says:

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Leap! thy broad tail waves a light.  
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,  
Canopied in fringes;  
Leap! those tasselled ears of thine  
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,  
Down their golden inches.

And again, in the *Song of a Tree-Spirit* :

The divine impulsion cleaves  
In dim movements to the leaves  
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted,  
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—  
In the sunlight and the moonlight  
Greenly sifted through the trees,  
Ever wave the Eden trees,  
In the nightlight and the moonlight,  
With a ruffling of green branches,  
Shaded off to resonances,  
Never stirred by rain or breeze.

The thoughts here belong to a high order of poetry, but could not have been wrought into effective expression without the aid of those repetitions, those unusual phrases, those quaintnesses, in a word, which it has been too long the fashion to censure, indiscriminately, under the one general head of "affectation." No poet will fail to be pleased with the two extracts I have here given; but no doubt there are some who will find it hard to reconcile the psychal impossibility of refraining from admiration with the too-hastily at-

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tained mental conviction that, critically, there is nothing to admire.

### XXXVII

Mozart declared, on his death-bed, that he "began to see what may be done in music"; and it is to be hoped that De Meyer and the rest of the spasmodists will eventually begin to understand what may not be done in this particular branch of the fine arts.

### XXXVIII

For my part I agree with Joshua Barnes: nobody but Solomon could have written the *Iliad*. The catalogue of ships was the work of Robins.

### XXXIX

In Colton's *American Review* for October, 1845, a gentleman, well known for his scholarship, has a forcible paper on *The Scotch School of Philosophy and Criticism*. But although the paper is "forcible," it presents the most singular admixture of error and truth, the one dovetailed into the other after a fashion which is novel, to say the least of it. Were I to designate in a few words what the whole article demonstrated, I should say "the folly of not beginning at the beginning; of neglecting the giant Moulineau's advice to his friend Ram." Here is a passage from the essay in question:

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“ The Doctors [Campbell and Johnson] both charge Pope with error and inconsistency,—error in supposing that in English, of metrical lines unequal in the number of syllables and pronounced in equal times, the longer suggests celerity (this being the principle of the Alexandrine); inconsistency, in that Pope himself uses the same contrivance to convey the contrary idea of slowness. But why in English? It is not and cannot be disputed that, in the hexameter verse of the Greeks and Latins, which is the model in this matter, what is distinguished as the ‘ dactylic line ’ was uniformly applied to express velocity. How was it to do so? Simply from the fact of being pronounced in an equal time with, while containing a greater number of syllables or ‘ bars ’ than, the ordinary or average measure; as, on the other hand, the spondaic line, composed of the minimum number, was, upon the same principle, used to indicate slowness. So, too, of the Alexandrine in English versification. No, says Campbell, there is a difference: the Alexandrine is not, in fact, like the dactylic line, pronounced in the common time. But does this alter the principle? What is the rationale of metre, whether the classical hexameter or the English heroic? ”

I have written an essay on the *Rationale of Verse*, in which the whole topic is surveyed *ab initio*, and with reference to general and immutable principles. To



Thomas Campbell

*Thos Campbell*

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this essay I refer Mr. Bristed. In the meantime, without troubling myself to ascertain whether Doctors Johnson and Campbell are wrong, or whether Pope is wrong, or whether the reviewer is right or wrong, at this point or at that, let me succinctly state what is the truth on the topics at issue. And, first, the same principles, in all cases, govern all verse. What is true in English is true in Greek. Secondly, in a series of lines, if one line contains more syllables than the law of the verse demands, and if, nevertheless, this line is pronounced in the same time, upon the whole, as the rest of the lines, then this line suggests celerity on account of the increased rapidity of enunciation required. Thus in the Greek hexameter the dactylic lines—those most abounding in dactyls—serve best to convey the idea of rapid motion. The spondaic lines convey that of slowness. Thirdly, it is a gross mistake to suppose that the Greek dactylic line is “the model in this matter”—the matter of the English Alexandrine. The Greek dactylic line is of the same number of feet, bars, beats, pulsations, as the ordinary dactylic-spondaic lines among which it occurs. But the Alexandrine is longer by one foot, by one pulsation, than the pentameters among which it arises. For its pronunciation it demands more time, and therefore, *ceteris paribus*, it would well serve to convey the impression of length, or duration, and thus, indirectly, of slowness. I say *ceteris paribus*. But, by varying conditions, we can

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effect a total change in the impression conveyed. When the idea of slowness is conveyed by the Alexandrine, it is not conveyed by any slower enunciation of syllables; that is to say, it is not directly conveyed, but indirectly, through the idea of length in the whole line. Now, if we wish to convey, by means of an Alexandrine, the impression of velocity, we readily do so by giving rapidity to our enunciation of the syllables composing the several feet. To effect this, however, we must have more syllables or we shall get through the whole line too quickly for the intended time. To get more syllables, all we have to do is to use, in place of iambuses, what our prosodies call anapæsts.<sup>1</sup> Thus in the line,

Flies o'er the unbending corn and skims along the main,  
the syllables " the unbend " form an anapæst and, demanding unusual rapidity of enunciation, in order that we may get them in the ordinary time of an iambus, serve to suggest celerity. By the elision of " e " in " the," as is customary, the whole of the intended effect is lost; for " th' unbend " is nothing more than the usual iambus. In a word, whenever an Alexandrine expresses celerity, we shall find it to contain one

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<sup>1</sup> I use the prosodial word " anapæst " merely because here I have no space to show what the reviewer will admit I have distinctly shown in the essay referred to; viz., that the additional syllable introduced does not make the foot an anapæst, or the equivalent of an anapæst, and that, if it did, it would spoil the line. On this topic, and on all topics connected with verse, there is not a prosody in existence which is not a mere jumble of the grossest error.

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or more anapæsts; the more anapæsts, the more decided the impression. But the tendency of the Alexandrine, consisting merely of the usual iambuses, is to convey slowness; although it conveys this idea feebly on account of conveying it indirectly. It follows, from what I have said, that the common pentameter, interspersed with anapæsts, would better convey celerity than the Alexandrine interspersed with them in a similar degree; and it unquestionably does.

### XL

This "species of nothingness" is quite as reasonable, at all events, as any "kind of something-ness." See Cowley's *Creation*, where,

An unshaped kind of something first appeared.

### XLI

If any ambitious man have a fancy to revolutionize, at one effort, the universal world of human thought, human opinion, and human sentiment, the opportunity is his own; the road to immortal renown lies straight, open, and unincumbered before him. All that he has to do is to write and publish a very little book. Its title should be simple, a few plain words: "My Heart Laid Bare." But—this little book must be true to its title.

Now, is it not very singular that, with the rabid thirst for notoriety which distinguishes so many of



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mankind—so many, too, who care not a fig what is thought of them after death, there should not be found one man having sufficient hardihood to write this little book? To “write,” I say. There are ten thousand men who, if the book were once written, would laugh at the notion of being disturbed by its publication during their life, and who could not even conceive why they should object to its being published after their death. But to write it—there is the rub. No man dare write it. No man ever will dare write it. No man could write it, even if he dared. The paper would shrivel and blaze at every touch of the fiery pen.

### XLII

All that the man of genius demands for his exaltation is moral matter in motion. It makes no difference whither tends the motion, whether for him or against him, and it is absolutely of no consequence “what is the matter.”

### XLIII

To converse well, we need the cool tact of talent; to talk well, the glowing abandon of genius. Men of very high genius, however, talk at one time very well, at another very ill: well, when they have full time, full scope, and a sympathetic listener; ill, when they fear interruption and are annoyed by the impossibility of exhausting the topic during that particular talk. The



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partial genius is flashy, scrappy. The true genius shudders at incompleteness, imperfection, and usually prefers silence to saying the something which is not everything that should be said. He is so filled with his theme that he is dumb, first, from not knowing how to begin, where there seems eternally beginning behind beginning, and, secondly, from perceiving his true end at so infinite a distance. Sometimes, dashing into a subject, he blunders, hesitates, stops short, sticks fast, and because he has been overwhelmed by the rush and multiplicity of his thoughts, his hearers sneer at his inability to think. Such a man finds his proper element in those "great occasions" which confound and prostrate the general intellect.

Nevertheless, by his conversation, the influence of the conversationist upon mankind in general is more decided than that of the talker by his talk; the latter invariably talks to best purpose with his pen. And good conversationists are more rare than respectable talkers. I know many of the latter; and of the former only five or six, among whom I can call to mind, just now, Mr. Willis, Mr. J. T. S. Sullivan, of Philadelphia, Mr. W. M. R., of Petersburg, Va., and Mrs. S——d, formerly of New York. Most people in conversing force us to curse our stars that our lot was not cast among the African nation mentioned by Eudoxus—the savages who, having no mouths, never opened them, as a matter of course. And yet, if denied mouth, some

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persons whom I have in my eye would contrive to chatter on still, as they do now, through the nose.

### XLIV

I cannot tell how it happens, but, unless now and then, in a case of portrait-painting, very few of our artists can justly be held guilty of the crime imputed by Apelles to Protogenes—that of “being too natural.”

### XLV

“It was a pile of the oyster, which yielded the precious pearls of the South, and the artist had judiciously painted some with their lips parted, and showing within the large precious fruit in the attainment of which Spanish cupidity had already proved itself capable of every peril as well as every crime. At once true and poetical, no comment could have been more severe,” etc.—Mr. SIMMS'S *Damsel of Darien*.

Body of Bacchus! only think of poetical beauty in the countenance of a gaping oyster!

“And how natural, in an age so fanciful, to believe that the stars and starry groups beheld in the new world for the first time by the native of the old were especially assigned for its government and protection.”

Now, if by the old world be meant the East, and by the new world the West, I am at a loss to know what

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are the stars seen in the one which cannot be equally seen in the other. Mr. Simms has abundant faults, or had, among which inaccurate English; a proneness to revolting images and pet phrases, are the most noticeable. Nevertheless, leaving out of the question Brockden Brown and Hawthorne (who are each a genus), he is immeasurably the best writer of fiction in America. He has more vigor, more imagination, more movement, and more general capacity than all our novelists, save Cooper, combined.

### XLVI

All in a hot and copper sky  
The bloody sun at noon  
Just up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the moon.—COLERIDGE.

Is it possible that the poet did not know the apparent diameter of the moon to be greater than that of the sun?

### XLVII

Here is an edition,<sup>1</sup> which, so far as microscopical excellence and absolute accuracy of typography are concerned, might well be prefaced with the phrase of the *Koran*, "There is no error in this book." We cannot call a single inverted "o" an error, can we? But I am really as glad of having found that inverted "o," as ever was a Columbus or an Archimedes. What, after

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<sup>1</sup> Camöens—Genoa, 1798.

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all, are continents discovered or silversmiths exposed ? Give us a good " o " turned upside-down, and a whole herd of bibliomaniac Arguses overlooking it for years.

### XLVIII

" That sweet smile and serene, that smile never seen but upon the face of the dying and the dead."—*Ernest Maltravers*.

Bulwer is not the man to look a stern fact in the face. He would rather sentimentalize upon a vulgar although picturesque error. Who ever really saw anything but horror in the smile of the dead ? We so earnestly desire to fancy it " sweet "—that is the source of the mistake, if, indeed, there ever was a mistake in the question.

### XLIX

The misapplication of quotations is clever and has a capital effect, when well done ; but Lord Brougham has not exactly that kind of capacity which the thing requires. One of the best hits in this way is made by Tieck, and I have lately seen it appropriated, with interesting complacency, in an English magazine. The author of the *Journey into the Blue Distance* is giving an account of some young ladies, not very beautiful, whom he caught *in mediis rebus*, at their toilet. " They were curling their monstrous heads," says he, " as Shakespeare says of the waves in a storm."

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### L

Here are both Dickens and Bulwer perpetually using the adverb "directly" in the sense of "as soon as." "Directly he came I did so and so."—"Directly I knew it I said this and that." But observe!—"Grammar is hardly taught" [in the United States], "being thought an unnecessary basis for other learning." I quote *America and her Resources*, by the British counsellor at law, John Bristed.

### LI

At Ermenonville, too, there is a striking instance of the Gallic rhythm with which a Frenchman regards the English verse. There Gerardin has the following inscription to the memory of Shenstone:

This plain stone  
To William Shenstone.  
In his writings he displayed  
A mind natural;  
At Leasowes he laid  
Arcadian greens rural.

There are few Parisians speaking English who would find anything particularly the matter with this epitaph.

### LII

Upon her was lavished the enthusiastic applause of the most correct taste and of the deepest sensibility. Human triumph, in all that is most exciting and

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delicious, never went beyond that which she experienced, or never but in the case of Taglioni. For what are the extorted adulations that fall to the lot of the conqueror?—what even are the extensive honors of the popular author, his far-reaching fame, his high influence, or the most devout public appreciation of his works to that rapturous approbation of the personal woman, that spontaneous, instant, present, and palpable applause, those irrepressible acclamations, those eloquent sighs and tears which the idolized Malibran at once heard, and saw, and deeply felt that she deserved? Her brief career was one gorgeous dream, for even the many sad intervals of her grief were but dust in the balance of her glory. In this book <sup>1</sup> I read much about the causes which curtailed her existence; and there seems to hang around them, as here given, an indistinctness which the fair memorialist tries in vain to illumine. She seems never to approach the full truth. She seems never to reflect that the speedy decease was but a condition of the rapturous life. No thinking person, hearing Malibran sing, could have doubted that she would die in the spring of her days. She crowded ages into hours. She left the world at twenty-five, having existed her thousands of years.

### LIII

“Accursed be the heart that does not wildly throb,

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<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs and Letters of Madame Malibran*, by the Countess of Merlin.



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and palsied be the eye that will not weep over the woes of the wanderer of Switzerland."—*Monthly Register*, 1807.

This is "dealing damnation round the land" to some purpose,—upon the reader, and not upon the author, as usual. For my part I shall be one of the damned; for I have in vain endeavored to see even a shadow of merit in anything ever written by either of the Montgomeries.

### LIV

Strange—that I should here<sup>1</sup> find the only non-execrable barbarian attempts at imitation of the Greek and Roman measures!

### LV

In my reply to the letter signed "Outis," and defending Mr. Longfellow from certain charges supposed to have been made against him by myself, I took occasion to assert that "of the class of wilful plagiarists nine out of ten are authors of established reputation who plunder recondite, neglected, or forgotten books." I came to this conclusion *a priori*; but experience has confirmed me in it. Here is a plagiarism from Channing; and as it is perpetrated by an anonymous writer

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<sup>1</sup> *Forelæsninger over det Danske Sprog, eller resoneret Dansk Grammatik, ved Jacob Buden.*

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in a monthly magazine, the theft seems at war with my assertion, until it is seen that the magazine in question is Campbell's *New Monthly* for August, 1828. Channing, at that time, was comparatively unknown; and, besides, the plagiarism appeared in a foreign country, where there was little probability of detection. Channing, in his essay on Bonaparte, says:

“ We would observe that military talent, even of the highest order, is far from holding the first place among intellectual endowments. It is one of the lower forms of genius, for it is not conversant with the highest and richest objects of thought. . . . Still, the chief work of a general is to apply physical force, to remove physical obstructions, to avail himself of physical aids and advantages, to act on matter, to overcome rivers, ramparts, mountains, and human muscles; and these are not the highest objects of mind, nor do they demand intelligence of the highest order; and, accordingly, nothing is more common than to find men, eminent in this department, who are almost wholly wanting in the noblest energies of the soul, in imagination and taste, in the capacity of enjoying works of genius, in large views of human nature, in the moral sciences, in the application of analysis and generalization to the human mind and to society, and in original conceptions on the great subjects which have absorbed the most glorious understandings.”

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The thief in the *New Monthly*, says:

“Military talent, even of the highest *grade*, is *very* far from holding the first place among intellectual endowments. It is one of the lower forms of genius, for it is *never made* conversant with the *more delicate and abstruse of mental operations*. It is used to apply physical force; to remove physical force; to remove physical obstructions; to avail itself of physical aids and advantages; and all these are not the highest objects of mind, nor do they demand intelligence of the highest *and rarest* order. Nothing is more common than to find men eminent in the science and practice of war, *wholly* wanting in the nobler energies of the soul; in imagination, in taste, in *enlarged* views of human nature, in the moral sciences, in the application of analysis and generalization to the human mind and to society; or in original conceptions on the great subjects which have *occupied and* absorbed the most glorious of human understandings.”

The article in the *New Monthly* is on *The State of Parties*. The italics are mine.

Apparent plagiarisms frequently arise from an author's self-repetition. He finds that something he has already published has fallen dead, been overlooked, or that it is peculiarly apropos to another subject now under discussion. He therefore introduces the passage, often without allusion to his having printed it

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before; and sometimes he introduces it into an anonymous article. An anonymous writer is thus, now and then, unjustly accused of plagiarism, when the sin is merely that of self-repetition. In the present case, however, there has been a deliberate plagiarism of the silliest as well as meanest species. Trusting to the obscurity of his original, the plagiarist has fallen upon the idea of killing two birds with one stone, of dispensing with all disguise but that of decoration. Channing says "order"; the writer in the *New Monthly* says "grade." The former says that this order is "far from holding," etc.; the latter says it is "very far from holding." The one says that military talent is "not conversant," and so on; the other says "it is never made conversant." The one speaks of "the highest and richest objects"; the other of "the more delicate and abstruse." Channing speaks of "thought; the thief of "mental operations." Channing mentions "intelligence of the highest order"; the thief will have it of "the highest and rarest." Channing observes that military talent is often "almost wholly wanting," etc.; the thief maintains it to be "wholly wanting." Channing alludes to "large views of human nature," the thief can be content with nothing less than "enlarged" ones. Finally, the American having been satisfied with a reference to "subjects which have absorbed the most glorious understandings," the Cockney puts him to shame at once by dis-

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coursing about "subjects which have occupied and absorbed the most glorious of human understandings" —as if one could be absorbed, without being occupied, by a subject; as if "of" were here anything more than two superfluous letters, and as if there were any chance of the reader's supposing that the understandings in question were the understandings of frogs, or jackasses, or Johnny Bulls.

By the way, in a case of this kind, whenever there is a question as to who is the original and who the plagiarist, the point may be determined, almost invariably, by observing which passage is amplified, or exaggerated, in tone. To disguise his stolen horse, the uneducated thief cuts off the tail; but the educated thief prefers tying on a new tail at the end of the old one and painting them both sky blue.

### LVI

When I consider the true talent, the real force of Mr. Emerson, I am lost in amazement at finding him little more than a respectful imitation of Carlyle. Is it possible that Mr. E. has ever seen a copy of Seneca? Scarcely, or he would long ago have abandoned his model in utter confusion at the parallel between his own worship of the author of *Sartor Resartus* and the aping of Sallust by Aruntius, as described in the 114th Epistle. In the writer of the *History of the Punic Wars*, Emerson is portrayed to the life. The parallel

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is close; for not only is the imitation of the same character, but the things imitated are identical. Undoubtedly it is to be said of Sallust, far more plausibly than of Carlyle, that his obscurity, his unusuality of expression, and his Laconism (which had the effect of diffuseness, since the time gained in the mere perusal of his pithinesses is trebly lost in the necessity of cogitating them out)—it may be said of Sallust, more truly than of Carlyle, that these qualities bore the impress of his genius, and were but a portion of his unaffected thought. If there is any difference between Aruntius and Emerson, this difference is clearly in favor of the former, who was in some measure excusable, on the ground that he was as great a fool as the latter is not.

### LVII

I believe that odors have an altogether peculiar force, in affecting us through association,—a force differing essentially from that of objects addressing the touch, the taste, the sight, or the hearing.

### LVIII

It would have been becoming, I think, in Bulwer, to have made at least a running acknowledgment of that extensive indebtedness to Arnay's *Private Life of the Romans*<sup>1</sup> which he had so little scruple about incurring, during the composition of *The Last Days of*

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<sup>1</sup> 1764.



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*Pompeii.* He acknowledges, I believe, what he owes to Sir William Gell's *Pompeiana*. Why this? why not that?

### LIX

One of our truest poets is Thomas Buchanan Read. His most distinctive features are, first, "tenderness," or subdued passion, and, secondly, fancy. His sin is imitateness. At present, although evincing high capacity, he is but a copyist of Longfellow, that is to say, but the echo of an echo. Here is a beautiful thought which is not the property of Mr. Read:

And, where the spring-time sun had longer shone,  
A violet looked up and found itself alone.

Here again: a spirit

Slowly through the lake descended,  
Till from her hidden form below  
The waters took a golden glow,  
As if the star which made her forehead bright  
Had burst and filled the lake with light.

Lowell has some lines very similar, ending with

As if a star had burst within his brain.

### LX

I cannot say that I ever fairly comprehended the force of the term "insult," until I was given to understand, one day, by a member of the *North American Review* clique, that this journal was "not only willing

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but anxious to render me that justice which had been already rendered me by the *Revue Française* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*," but was "restrained from so doing" by my "invincible spirit of antagonism." I wish the *North American Review* to express no opinion of me whatever, for I have none of it. In the meantime, as I see no motto on its title-page, let me recommend it one from Sterne's *Letter from France*. Here it is: "As we rode along the valley we saw a herd of asses on the top of one of the mountains—how they viewed and reviewed us!"

### LXI

Von Raumer says that Enslen, a German optician, conceived the idea of throwing a shadowy figure, by optical means, into the chair of Banquo; and that the thing was readily done. Intense effect was produced; and I do not doubt that an American audience might be electrified by the feat. But our managers not only have no invention of their own, but no energy to avail themselves of that of others.

### LXII

A capital book, generally speaking;<sup>1</sup> but Mr. Grattan has a bad habit,—that of loitering in the road, of dallying and toying with his subjects, as a kitten with a mouse, instead of grasping it firmly at once and eat-

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<sup>1</sup> *Highways and Byways*.

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ing it up without more ado. He takes up too much time in the anteroom. He has never done with his introductions. Occasionally one introduction is but the vestibule to another; so that by the time he arrives at his main incidents there is nothing more to tell. He seems afflicted with that curious but common perversity observed in garrulous old women—the desire of tantalizing by circumlocution. Mr. G.'s circumlocution, however, is by no means like that which Albany Fonblanque describes as a "style of about and about and all the way round to nothing and nonsense." . . . If the greasy-looking lithograph here given as a frontispiece be meant for Mr. Grattan, then is Mr. Grattan like nobody else, for the fact is, I never yet knew an individual with a wire wig, or the countenance of an underdone apple dumpling. . . . As a general rule, no man should put his own face in his own book. In looking at the author's countenance the reader is seldom in condition to keep his own.

### LXIII

Here is a good idea for a magazine paper; let somebody "work it up": A flippant pretender to universal acquirement, a would-be Crichton, engrosses, for an hour or two, perhaps, the attention of a large company, most of whom are profoundly impressed by his knowledge. He is very witty, in especial, at the expense of a modest young gentleman who ventures to

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make no reply, and who finally leaves the room as if overwhelmed with confusion, the Crichton greeting his exit with a laugh. Presently he returns, followed by a footman carrying an armful of books. These are deposited on the table. The young gentleman, now, referring to some pencilled notes which he had been secretly taking during the Crichton's display of erudition, pins the latter to his statements, each by each, and refutes them all in turn, by reference to the very authorities cited by the egotist himself, whose ignorance at all points is thus made apparent.

### LXIV

A long time ago, twenty-three or four years ago at least, Edward C. Pinckney, of Baltimore, published an exquisite poem entitled *A Health*. It was profoundly admired by the critical few, but had little circulation—this for no better reason than that the author was born too far South. I quote a few lines:

Affections are as thoughts to her,  
The measures of her hours;  
Her feelings have the fragrancy,  
The freshness of young flowers.  
To her the better elements  
And kindlier stars have given  
A form so fair, that, like the air,  
'T is less of earth than heaven.

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Now, in 1842, Mr. George Hill published *The Ruins of Athens and Other Poems*, and from one of the "Other Poems" I quote what follows:

And thoughts go sporting through her mind  
Like children among flowers;  
And deeds of gentle goodness are  
The measures of her hours.  
In soul or face she bears no trace  
Of one from Eden driven,  
But like the rainbow seems, though born  
Of earth, a part of heaven.

Is this plagiarism or is it not? I merely ask for information.

### LXV

Had the *George Balcombe* of Professor Beverley Tucker been the work of any one born north of Mason and Dixon's line, it would have been long ago recognized as one of the very noblest fictions ever written by an American. It is almost as good as *Caleb Williams*. The manner in which the cabal of the *North American Review* first write all our books and then review them, puts me in mind of the fable about the Lion and the Painter. It is high time that the literary South took its own interests into its own charge.

### LXVI

Here is a plot which, with all its complexity, has no adaptation, no dependency; it is involute and nothing

## Marginalia

more, having all the air of G——'s wig, or the cycles and epicycles in Ptolemy's *Almagest*.

### LXVII

We might give two plausible derivations of the epithet "weeping," as applied to the willow. We might say that the word has its origin in the pendulous character of the long branches, which suggest the idea of water dripping; or we might assert that the term comes from a fact in the natural history of the tree. It has a vast insensible perspiration, which, upon sudden cold, condenses, and sometimes is precipitated in a shower. Now, one might very accurately determine the bias and value of a man's powers of causality, by observing which of these two derivations he would adopt. The former is, beyond question, the true; and, for this reason,—that common or vulgar epithets are universally suggested by common or immediately obvious things, without strict regard to any exactitude in application; but the latter would be greedily seized by nine philologists out of ten for no better cause than its epigrammatism, than the pointedness with which the singular fact seems to touch the occasion. Here, then, is a subtle source of error which Lord Bacon has neglected. It is an idol of the Wit.

### LXVIII

In a *Hymn for Christmas*, by Mrs. Hemans, we find the following stanza:



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Oh, lovely voices of the sky  
Which hymned the Saviour's birth,  
Are ye not singing still on high,  
Ye that sang "Peace on Earth" ?  
To us yet speak the strains  
Wherewith, in times gone by,  
Ye blessed the Syrian swains,  
Oh, voices of the sky!

And, at page 305 of *The Christian Keepsake and Missionary Annual* for 1840, a Philadelphia Annual, we find *A Christmas Carol*, by Richard W. Dodson, the first stanza running thus:

Angel voices of the sky!  
Ye that hymned Messiah's birth,  
Sweetly singing from on high  
"Peace, good-will to all on earth!"  
Oh, to us impart those strains!  
Bid our doubts and fears to cease!  
Ye that cheered the Syrian swains,  
Cheer us with that song of peace!

### LXIX

"The more there are great excellences in a work the less am I surprised at finding great demerits. When a book is said to have many faults, nothing is decided, and I cannot tell, by this, whether it is excellent or execrable. It is said of another that it is without fault; if the account be just, the work cannot be excellent."—TRUBLET.

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The "cannot" here is much too positive. The opinions of Trublet are wonderfully prevalent, but they are none the less demonstrably false. It is merely the indolence of genius which has given them currency. The truth seems to be that genius of the highest order lives in a state of perpetual vacillation between ambition and the scorn of it. The ambition of a great intellect is (at best) negative. It struggles, it labors, it creates, not because excellence is desirable, but because to be excelled where there exists a sense of the power to excel is unendurable. Indeed, I cannot help thinking that the greatest intellects (since these most clearly perceive the laughable absurdity of human ambition) remain contentedly "mute and inglorious." At all events, the vacillation of which I speak is the prominent feature of genius. Alternately inspired and depressed, its inequalities of mood are stamped upon its labors. This is the truth, generally, but it is a truth very different from the assertion involved in the "cannot" of Trublet. Give to genius a sufficiently enduring motive, and the result will be harmony, proportion, beauty, perfection—all, in this case, synonymous terms. Its supposed "inevitable" irregularities shall not be found; for it is clear that the susceptibility to impressions of beauty, that susceptibility which is the most important element of genius, implies an equally exquisite sensitiveness and aversion to deformity. The motive—the enduring motive—has indeed,

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hitherto fallen rarely to the lot of genius; but I could point to several compositions which, "without any fault," are yet "excellent," supremely so. The world, too, is on the threshold of an epoch, wherein, with the aid of a calm philosophy, such compositions shall be ordinarily the work of that genius which is true. One of the first and most essential steps, in overpassing this threshold, will serve to kick out of the world's way this very idea of Trublet—this untenable and paradoxical idea of the incompatibility of genius with art.

### LXX

It may well be doubted whether a single paragraph of merit can be found either in the *Koran* of Lawrence Sterne or in the *Lacon* of Colton, of which paragraph the origin, or at least the germ, may not be traced to Seneca, to Plutarch (through Machiavelli), to Machiavelli himself, to Bacon, to Burdon, to Burton, to Bolingbroke, to Rochefoucauld, to Balzac, the author of *La Manière de Bien Penser*, or to Bielfeld, the German, who wrote, in French, *Les Premiers Traits de l'Érudition Universelle*.

### LXXI

A man of genius, if not permitted to choose his own subject, will do worse, in letters, than if he had talents none at all. And here how imperatively is he controlled! To be sure, he can write to suit himself—but in the same manner his publishers print. From the

## Marginalia

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nature of our copyright laws, he has no individual powers. As for his free agency, it is about equal to that of the dean and chapter of the see-cathedral, in a British election of bishops, an election held by virtue of the king's writ of *congé d'élire*, specifying the person to be elected.

### LXXII

To see distinctly the machinery—the wheels and pinions—of any work of art is, unquestionably, of itself, a pleasure, but one which we are able to enjoy only just in proportion as we do not enjoy the legitimate effect designed by the artist; and, in fact, it too often happens that to reflect analytically upon art is to reflect after the fashion of the mirrors in the temple of Smyrna, which represent the fairest images as deformed.

### LXXIII

With the aid of a lantern I have been looking again at *Niagara and Other Poems* (Lord only knows if that be the true title!), but “there’s nothing in it,” at least nothing of Mr. Lord’s own—nothing which is not stolen, or (more delicately) transfused, transmitted. By the way, Newton says a great deal about “fits of easy transmission and reflection,”<sup>1</sup> and I have no doubt that *Niagara* was put together in one of these identical fits.

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<sup>1</sup> Of the solar rays, in the *Optics*.

## Marginalia

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### LXXIV

A remarkable work,<sup>1</sup> and one which I find much difficulty in admitting to be the composition of a woman. Not that many good and glorious things have not been the composition of women, but because, here, the severe precision of style, the thoroughness, and the luminousness are points never observable in even the most admirable of their writings. Who is Lady Georgiana Fullerton? Who is that Countess of Dacre who edited *Ellen Wareham*, the most passionate of fictions, approached, only in some particulars of passion, by this? The great defect of *Ellen Middleton* lies in the disgusting sternness, captiousness, and bullet-headedness of her husband. We cannot sympathize with her love for him. And the intense selfishness of the rejected lover precludes that compassion which is designed. Alice is a creation of true genius. The imagination throughout is of a lofty order, and the snatches of original verse would do honor to any poet living. But the chief merit, after all, is that of the style, about which it is difficult to say too much in the way of praise, although it has, now and then, an odd Gallicism, such as "she lost her head," meaning she grew crazy. There is much, in the whole manner of this book, which puts me in mind of *Caleb Williams*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ellen Middleton*,

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### LXXV

The God-abstractions of the modern polytheism are nearly in as sad a state of perplexity and promiscuity as were the more substantial deities of the Greeks. Not a quality named that does not impinge upon some one other; and Porphyry admits that Vesta, Rhea, Ceres, Themis, Proserpina, Bacchus, Attis, Adonis, Silenus, Priapus, and the Satyrs, were merely different terms for the same thing. Even gender was never precisely settled. Servius on Virgil mentions a Venus with a beard. In Macrobius, too, Calvus talks of her as if she were a man; while Valerius Soranus expressly calls Jupiter "the Mother of the Gods."

### LXXVI

The next work of Carlyle will be entitled *Bow-Wow* and the title-page will have a motto from the opening chapter of the *Koran*: "There is no error in this book."

### LXXVII

Surely M—— cannot complain of the manner in which his book has been received; for the public, in regard to it, has given him just such an assurance as Polyphemus pacified Ulysses with, while his companions were being eaten up before his eyes. "Your book, Mr. M——," says the public, "shall be, I pledge you my word, the very last that I devour."



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### LXXVIII

The modern reformist, Philosophy, which annihilates the individual by way of aiding the mass; and the late reformist, Legislation, which prohibits pleasure with the view of advancing happiness, seem to be chips of that old block of a French feudal law which, to prevent young partridges from being disturbed, imposed penalties upon hoeing and weeding.

### LXXIX

That Demosthenes "turned out very badly" appears, beyond dispute, from a passage in *Maker de vet. et. rect. Prom. Ling. Græcæ*, where we read "Nec illi (Demostheni) turpe videbatur, optimis relictis magistris, ad canes se conferre," etc., etc., that is to say, Demosthenes was not ashamed to quit good society and "go to the dogs."

### LXXX

When — and — *pavoneggiarsi* about the celebrated personages whom they have "seen" in their travels, we shall not be far wrong in inferring that these celebrated personages were seen *ἐκός*, as Pindar says he "saw" Archilochus, who died ages before the former was born.

### LXXXI

I cannot help thinking that romance-writers, in general, might, now and then, find their account in taking

## Marginalia

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a hint from the Chinese, who, in spite of building their houses downward, have still sense enough to begin their books at the end.

### LXXXII

La Harpe (who was no critic) has, nevertheless, done little more than strict justice to the fine taste and precise finish of Racine in all that regards the minor morals of literature. In these he as far excels Pope, as Pope the veriest dolt in his own *Dunciad*.

### LXXXIII

I have sometimes amused myself by endeavoring to fancy what would be the fate of an individual gifted, or rather accursed, with an intellect very far superior to that of his race. Of course, he would be conscious of his superiority; nor could he (if otherwise constituted as man is) help manifesting his consciousness. Thus he would make himself enemies at all points. And, since his opinions and speculations would widely differ from those of all mankind, that he would be considered a madman, is evident. How horribly painful such a condition! Hell could invent no greater torture than that of being charged with abnormal weakness on account of being abnormally strong.

In like manner, nothing can be clearer than that a very generous spirit, truly feeling what all merely profess, must inevitably find itself misconceived in

## Marginalia

every direction, its motives misinterpreted. Just as extremes of intelligence would be thought fatuity, so excess of chivalry could not fail of being looked upon as meanness in its last degree; and so on with other virtues. This subject is a painful one indeed. That individuals have so soared above the plane of their race, is scarcely to be questioned; but, in looking back through history for traces of their existence, we should pass over all biographies of "the good and the great," while we search carefully the slight records of wretches who died in prison, in Bedlam, or upon the gallows.

### LXXXIV

Samuel Butler, of Hudibrastic memory, must have had a prophetic eye to the American Congress when he defined a rabble as, "A congregation or assembly of the States-General, every one being of a several judgment concerning whatever business be under consideration." . . . "They meet only to quarrel," he adds, "and then return home full of satisfaction and narrative."

### LXXXV

I have now before me a book in which the most noticeable thing is the pertinacity with which "Monarch" and "King" are printed with a capital M and a capital K. The author, it seems, has been lately presented at Court. He will employ a small "g" in

## Marginalia

future, I presume, whenever he is so unlucky as to have to speak of his God.

### LXXXVI

Were I called on to define, very briefly, the term "art," I should call it the "reproduction of what the senses perceive in nature through the veil of the soul." The mere imitation, however accurate, of what is in nature, entitles no man to the sacred name of "artist." Denner was no artist. The grapes of Zeuxis were inartistic, unless in a bird's-eye view; and not even the curtain of Parrhasius could conceal his deficiency in point of genius. I have mentioned the "veil of the soul." Something of the kind appears indispensable in art. We can, at any time, double the true beauty of an actual landscape by half closing our eyes as we look at it. The naked senses sometimes see too little, but then always they see too much.

### LXXXVII

With how unaccountable an obstinacy even our best writers persist in talking about "moral courage," as if there could be any courage that was not moral. The adjective is improperly applied to the subject instead of the object. The energy which overcomes fear, whether fear of evil threatening the person or threatening the impersonal circumstances amid which we exist, is, of course, simply a mental energy,—is, of

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course, simply "moral." But, in speaking of "moral courage" we imply the existence of physical. Quite as reasonable an expression would be that of "bodily thought," or of "muscular imagination."

### LXXXVIII

I have great faith in fools,—self-confidence my friends will call it:

Si demain, oubliant d'éclore,  
Le jour manquait, eh bien! demain  
Quelque fou trouverait encore  
Un flambeau pour le genre humain.

By the way, what with the new electric light and other matters, De Béranger's idea is not so very extravagant.

### LXXXIX

"He that is born to be a man," says Wieland, in his *Peregrinus Proteus*, "neither should nor can be anything nobler, greater, or better than a man." The fact is, that in efforts to soar above our nature, we invariably fall below it. Your reformist demigods are merely devils turned inside out.

### XC

The phrase of which our poets, and more especially our orators, are so fond, the phrase "music of the spheres," has arisen simply from a misconception of

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the Platonic word *μουσική*, which, with the Athenians, included not merely the harmonies of tune and time, but proportion generally. In recommending the study of "music" as "the best education for the soul," Plato referred to the cultivation of the taste in contradistinction from that of the pure reason. By the "music of the spheres" is meant the agreements, the adaptations,—in a word, the proportions,—developed in the astronomical laws. He had no allusion to music in our understanding of the term. The word "mosaic," which we derive from *μουσική*, refers, in like manner, to the proportion, or harmony of color, observed, or which should be observed, in the department of art so entitled.

### XCI

Not long ago, to call a man "a great wizard" was to invoke for him fire and fagot; but now, when we wish to run our *protégé* for President, we just dub him "a little magician." The fact is, that, on account of the curious modern *bouleversement* of old opinion, one cannot be too cautious of the grounds on which he lauds a friend or vituperates a foe.

### XCH

"Philosophy," says Hegel, "is utterly useless and fruitless, and, for this very reason, is the sublimest of all pursuits, the most deserving attention, and the



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most worthy of our zeal." This jargon was suggested, no doubt, by Tertullian's "Mortuus est Dei filius, credibile est quia ineptum: et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile."

### XCIII

A clever French writer of *Memoirs* is quite right in saying that "if the universities had been willing to permit it, the disgusting old *débauché* of Teos, with his eternal Batyllis, would long ago have been buried in the darkness of oblivion."

### XCIV

It is by no means an irrational fancy that, in a future existence, we shall look upon what we think our present existence, as a dream.

### XCV

"The artist belongs to his work, not the work to the artist."  
—NOVALIS.<sup>1</sup>

In nine cases out of ten it is pure waste of time to attempt extorting sense from a German apothegm; or, rather, any sense and every sense may be extorted from all of them. If, in the sentence above quoted, the intention is to assert that the artist is the slave of his theme, and must conform it to his thoughts, I have no faith in the idea, which appears to me that of an

<sup>1</sup> The *nom de plume* of Von Hardenberg.

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essentially prosaic intellect. In the hands of the true artist the theme, or "work," is but a mass of clay, of which anything (within the compass of the mass and quality of the clay) may be fashioned at will, or according to the skill of the workman. The clay is, in fact, the slave of the artist. It belongs to him. His genius, to be sure, is manifested, very distinctively, in the choice of the clay. It should be neither fine nor coarse, abstractly, but just so fine or so coarse, just so plastic or so rigid, as may best serve the purposes of the thing to be wrought, of the idea to be made out, or, more exactly, of the impression to be conveyed. There are artists, however, who fancy only the finest material, and who, consequently, produce only the finest ware. It is generally very transparent and excessively brittle.

### XCVI

Tell a scoundrel three or four times a day that he is the pink of probity, and you make him at least the perfection of "respectability" in good earnest. On the other hand, accuse an honorable man, too pertinaciously, of being a villain, and you will fill him with a perverse ambition to show you that you are not altogether in the wrong.

### XCVII

The Romans worshipped the standards; and the Roman standard happened to be an eagle. Our stan-

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dard is only one tenth of an eagle—a dollar, but we make all even by adoring it with tenfold devotion.

### XCVIII

A pumpkin has more angles than C——, and is altogether a cleverer thing. He is remarkable at one point only—at that of being remarkable for nothing.

### XCIX

“That evil predominates over good, becomes evident, when we consider that there can be found no aged person who would be willing to relive the life he has already lived.”—VOLNEY.

The idea here is not distinctly made out; for unless through the context, we cannot be sure whether the author means merely this: that every aged person fancies he might, in a different course of life, have been happier than in the one actually lived, and, for this reason, would not be willing to live his life over again, but some other life; or whether the sentiment is this: that if, upon the grave's brink, the choice between the expected death and the re-living the old life were offered any aged person, that person would prefer to die. The first proposition is, perhaps, true; but the last (which is the one designed) is not only doubtful, in point of mere fact, but is of no effect, even if granted to be true, in sustaining the original proposition, that

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evil predominates over good. It is assumed that the aged person will not re-live his life, because he knows that its evil predominated over its good. The source of error lies in the word "knows,"—in the assumption that we can ever be, really, in possession of the whole knowledge to which allusion is cloudily made. But there is a seeming, a fictitious knowledge; and this very seeming knowledge it is, of what the life has been, which incapacitates the aged person from deciding the question on its merits. He blindly deduces a notion of the happiness of the original real life, a notion of its preponderating evil or good, from a consideration of the secondary or supposititious one. In his estimate he merely strikes a balance between events, and leaves quite out of the account that elastic hope which is the Eos of all. Man's real life is happy, chiefly because he is ever expecting that it soon will be so. In regarding the supposititious life, however, we paint to ourselves chill certainties for warm expectations and grievances quadrupled in being foreseen. But because we cannot avoid doing this, strain our imaginative faculties as we will; because it is so very difficult, so nearly impossible a task, to fancy the known unknown, the done unaccomplished; and because (through our inability to fancy all this) we prefer death to a secondary life, does it in any manner follow that the evil of the properly considered real existence does predominate over the good?

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In order that a just estimate be made by Mr. Volney's "aged person," and from this estimate a judicious choice,—in order, again, that from this estimate and choice, we deduce any clear comparison of good with evil in human existence, it will be necessary that we obtain the opinion, or "choice," upon this point from an aged person who shall be in condition to appreciate, with precision, the hopes he is naturally led to leave out of question, but which reason tells us he would as strongly experience as ever in the absolute re-living of the life. On the other hand, too, he must be in condition to dismiss from the estimate the fears which he actually feels, and which show him bodily the ills that are to happen, but which fears, again, reason assures us he would not, in the absolute secondary life, encounter. Now, what mortal was ever in condition to make these allowances?—to perform impossibilities in giving these considerations their due weight? What mortal, then, was ever in condition to make a well-grounded choice? Now, from an ill-grounded one, are we to make deductions which shall guide us aright? How out of error shall we fabricate truth?

### C

This reasoning is as about convincing as would be that of a traveller who, going from Maryland to New York without entering Pennsylvania, should advance this feat as an argument against Leibnitz's Law of

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Continuity, according to which nothing passes from one state to another without passing through all the intermediate states.

### CI

Macaulay, in his just admiration of Addison, over-rates Tickell, and does not seem to be aware how much the author of the *Elegy* is indebted to French models. Boileau, especially, he robbed without mercy and without measure. A flagrant example is here. Boileau has the lines,

En vain contre " Le Cid " un ministre se ligue.  
Tout Paris pour Chimène à les yeux de Rodrigue.

Tickell thus appropriates them:

While the charm'd reader with thy thought complies,  
And views thy Rosamond with Henry's eyes.

### CII

Stolen, body and soul (and spoilt in the stealing), from a paper of the same title in the *European Magazine* for December, 1817. Blunderingly done throughout, and must have cost more trouble than an original thing. This makes paragraph 33 of my *Chapter on American Críbbage*. The beauty of these *exposés* must lie in the precision and unanswerability with which they are given, in day and date, in chapter and verse, and, above all, in an unveiling of the minute



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trickeries by which the thieves hope to disguise their stolen wares. I must soon a tale unfold, and an astonishing tale it will be. The C—— bears away the bell. The ladies, however, should positively not be guilty of these tricks; for one has never the heart to unmask or deplume them. After all, there is this advantage in purloining one's magazine papers: we are never forced to dispose of them under prime cost.

### CIII

*Amare et sapere vix Deo conceditur*, as acute Seneca well observes.

However acute might be Seneca, still he was not sufficiently acute to say this. The sentence is often attributed to him, but is not to be found in his works. *Semel insanavimus omnes*, a phrase often quoted, is invariably placed to the account of Horace, and with equal error. It is from the *De Honesto Amore* of the Italian Mantuanus, who has

Id commune malum; semel insanavimus omnes.

In the title, *De Honesto Amore*, by the way, Mantuanus misconceives the force of *honestus*, just as Dryden does in his translation of Virgil's

Et quocunque Deus circum caput egit honestum,

which he renders

On whate'er side he turns his honest face.

## Marginalia

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### CIV

No: he fell by his own fame. Like Richmann, he was blasted by the fires himself had sought and obtained from the heavens.

### CV

How overpowering a style is that of Curran! I use "overpowering" in the sense of the English "exquisite." I can imagine nothing more distressing than the extent of his eloquence.

### CVI

How radically has *Undine* been misunderstood! Beneath its obvious meaning there runs an undercurrent, simple, quite intelligible, artistically managed, and richly philosophical.

From internal evidence afforded by the book itself, I gather that the author suffered from the ills of a mal-arranged marriage, the bitter reflections thus engendered inducing the fable.

In the contrast between the artless, thoughtless, and careless character of Undine before possessing a soul, and her serious, enrapt, and anxious yet happy condition after possessing it,—a condition which, with all its multiform disquietudes, she feels still to be preferable to her original state,—Fouqué has beautifully painted the difference between the heart unused to

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love and the heart which has received its inspiration.

The jealousies which follow the marriage, arising from the conduct of Bertalda, are but the natural troubles of love; but the persecutions of Kuhleborn and the other water-spirits who take umbrage at Huldbrand's treatment of his wife, are meant to picture certain difficulties from the interference of relations in conjugal matters, difficulties which the author has himself experienced. The warning of Undine to Huldbrand, "Reproach me not upon the waters, or we part forever," is intended to embody the truth that quarrels between man and wife are seldom or never irremediable unless when taking place in the presence of third parties. The second wedding of the knight, with his gradual forgetfulness of Undine, and Undine's intense grief beneath the waters, are dwelt upon so pathetically, so passionately, that there can be no doubt of the author's personal opinions on the subject of second marriages, no doubt of his deep personal interest in the question. How thrillingly are these few and simple words made to convey his belief that the mere death of a beloved wife does not imply a separation so final or so complete as to justify an union with another!

"The fisherman had loved Undine with exceeding tenderness, and it was a doubtful conclusion to his

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mind that the mere disappearance of his beloved child could be properly viewed as her death."

This is where the old man is endeavoring to dissuade the knight from wedding Bertalda.

I cannot say whether the novelty of the conception of *Undine*, or the loftiness and purity of its ideality, or the intensity of its pathos, or the rigor of its simplicity, or the high artistic ability with which all are combined into a well-kept, well-*motiviert* whole of absolute unity of effect, is the particular chiefly to be admired.

How delicate and graceful are the transitions from subject to subject!—a point severely testing the authorial power, as when, for the purpose of the story, it becomes necessary that the knight, with Undine and Bertalda, shall proceed down the Danube. An ordinary novelist would have here tormented both himself and his readers in the search for a sufficient motive for the voyage. But in a fable such as *Undine* how all-sufficient, how well in keeping, appears the simple motive assigned!—

"In this grateful union of friendship and affection, winter came and passed away; and spring, with its foliage of tender green and heaven of softest blue, succeeded to gladden the hearts of the three inmates of the castle. What wonder, then, that its storks and

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swallows inspired them also with a disposition to travel ? ”

### CVII

I have at length attained the last page, which is a thing to thank God for; and all this may be logic, but I am sure it is nothing more. Until I get the means of refutation, however, I must be content to say, with the Jesuits, Le Sueur, and Jaquier, that “ I acknowledge myself obedient to the decrees of the Pope against the motion of the earth.”

### CVIII

Not so. The first number of the *Gentleman's Magazine* was published on the first of January, 1731; but long before this—in 1681—there appeared the *Monthly Recorder* with all the magazine features. I have a number of the *London Magazine*, dated 1760; commenced 1732, at least, but I have reason to think much earlier.

### CIX

*Rhododaphne* (who wrote it ?) is brimfull of music;

*e. g.,*

By living streams, in sylvan shades,  
Where wind and wave symphonious make  
Rich melody, the youths and maids  
No more with choral music wake  
Lone Echo from her tangled brake.

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### CX

I have just finished the *Mysteries of Paris*, a work of unquestionable power, a museum of novel and ingenious incident, a paradox of childish folly and consummate skill. It has this point in common with all the "convulsive" fictions, that the incidents are consequential from the premises, while the premises themselves are laughably incredible. Admitting, for instance, the possibility of such a man as Rodolphe, and of such a state of society as would tolerate his perpetual interference, we have no difficulty in agreeing to admit the possibility of his accomplishing all that is accomplished. Another point which distinguishes the Sue school, is the total want of the *ars celare artem*. In effect the writer is always saying to the reader, "Now, in one moment, you shall see what you shall see. I am about to produce on you a remarkable impression. Prepare to have your imagination, or your pity, greatly excited." The wires are not only not concealed, but displayed as things to be admired, equally with the puppets they set in motion. The result is, that in perusing, for example, a pathetic chapter in the *Mysteries of Paris* we say to ourselves, without shedding a tear, "Now, here is something which will be sure to move every reader to tears." The philosophical motives attributed to Sue are absurd in the extreme. His first, and in fact his sole, object is to make an exciting and therefore salable book. The cant (implied or



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direct) about the amelioration of society, etc., is but a very usual trick among authors, whereby they hope to add such a tone of dignity or utilitarianism to their pages as shall gild the pill of their licentiousness. The ruse is even more generally employed by way of engrafting a meaning upon the otherwise unintelligible. In the latter case, however, this ruse is an after-thought, manifested in the shape of a moral, either appended (as in *Æsop*), or dovetailed into the body of the work, piece by piece, with great care, but never without leaving evidence of its after-insertion.

The translation (by C. H. Town) is very imperfect, and, by a too literal rendering of idioms, contrives to destroy the whole tone of the original. Or, perhaps, I should say, a too literal rendering of local peculiarities of phrase. There is one point (never yet, I believe, noticed) which obviously should be considered in translation. We should so render the original that the version should impress the people for whom it is intended, just as the original impresses the people for whom it (the original) is intended. Now, if we rigorously translate mere local idiosyncrasies of phrase (to say nothing of idioms) we inevitably distort the author's designed impression. We are sure to produce a whimsical, at least, if not always a ludicrous effect; for novelties, in a case of this kind, are incongruities, oddities. A distinction, of course, should be observed between those peculiarities of phrase which

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appertain to the nation and those which belong to the author himself, for these latter will have a similar effect upon all nations, and should be literally translated. It is merely the general inattention to the principle here proposed, which has given rise to so much international depreciation, if not positive contempt, as regards literature. The English reviews, for example, have abundant allusions to what they call the "frivolousness" of French letters, an idea chiefly derived from the impression made by the French manner merely; this manner, again, having in it nothing essentially frivolous, but affecting all foreigners as such (the English especially) through that oddity of which I have already assigned the origin. The French return the compliment, complaining of the British *gaucherie* in style. The phraseology of every nation has a taint of drollery about it in the ears of every other nation speaking a different tongue. Now, to convey the true spirit of an author, this taint should be corrected in translation. We should pride ourselves less upon literalness and more upon dexterity at paraphrase. Is it not clear that, by such dexterity, a translation may be made to convey to a foreigner a juster conception of an original than could the original itself?

The distinction I have made between mere idioms (which, of course, should never be literally rendered) and "local idiosyncrasies of phrase" may be exemplified by a passage at page 291 of Mr. Town's translation:

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“ ‘Never mind! Go in there! You will take the cloak of Calebasse. You will wrap yourself in it,’ ”  
etc., etc.

These are the words of a lover to his mistress, and are meant kindly, although imperatively. They embody a local peculiarity, a French peculiarity of phrase, and (to French ears) convey nothing dictatorial. To our own, nevertheless, they sound like the command of a military officer to his subordinate, and thus produce an effect quite different from that intended. The translation, in such case, should be a bold paraphrase. For example, “ I must insist upon your wrapping yourself in the cloak of Calebasse.”

Mr. Town's version of the *Mysterics of Paris*, however, is not objectionable on the score of excessive literality alone, but abounds in misapprehensions of the author's meaning. One of the strangest errors occurs at page 368, where we read:

“ ‘From a wicked, brutal savage and riotous rascal, he has made me a kind of honest man by saying only two words to me; but these words, *voyez-vous*, were like magic.’ ”

Here *voyez-vous* are made to be the two magical words spoken; but the translation should run, “ these words, do you see? were like magic.” The actual

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words described as producing the magical effect are "heart" and "honor."

Of similar character is a curious mistake at page 245:

"'He is a *gueux fini* and an attack will not save him,' added Nicholas. 'A—yes,' said the widow.'"

Many readers of Mr. Town's translation have no doubt been puzzled to perceive the force or relevancy of the widow's "A—yes" in this case. I have not the original before me, but take it for granted that it runs thus, or nearly so; "'Il est un gueux fini et un assaut ne l'intimidera pas.' 'Un—oui!' dit la veuve."

It must be observed that, in vivacious French colloquy, the *oui* seldom implies assent to the letter, but generally to the spirit, of a proposition. Thus, a Frenchman usually says "yes" where an Englishman would say "no." The latter's reply, for example, to the sentence, "An attack will not intimidate him," would be "No"; that is to say, "I grant you that it would not." The Frenchman, however, answers "Yes," meaning, "I agree with what you say, it would not." Both replies, of course, reaching the same point, although by opposite routes. With this understanding, it will be seen that the true version of the widow's *Un—oui!* should be, "One attack, I grant you, might not"; and that this is the version be-

## Marginalia

comes apparent when we read the words immediately following, "but every day—every day it is hell!"

An instance of another class of even more reprehensible blunders is to be found on page 297, where Bras-Rouge is made to say to a police-officer, "No matter; it is not of that I complain; every trade has its disagreements." Here, no doubt, the French is *désagrémens*—inconveniences, disadvantages, unpleasantnesses. *Désagrémens* conveys disagreements not even so nearly as, in Latin, *religio* implies religion.

I was not a little surprised, in turning over these pages, to come upon the admirable, thrice-admirable story called *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*, which is related by Pique-Vinaigre to his companions in *La Force*. Rarely have I read anything of which the exquisite skill so delighted me. For my soul I could not suggest a fault in it, except, perhaps, that the intention of telling a very pathetic story is a little too transparent.

But I say that I was surprised in coming upon this story, and I was so, because one of its points has been suggested to M. Sue by a tale of my own. *Coupe en Deux* has an ape remarkable for its size, strength, ferocity, and propensity to imitation. Wishing to commit a murder so cunningly that discovery would be impossible, the master of this animal teaches it to imitate the functions of a barber and incites it to cut the throat of a child, under the idea that, when the murder



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is discovered, it will be considered the uninstigated deed of the ape.

On first seeing this, I felt apprehensive that some of my friends would accuse me of plagiarizing from it my *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. But I soon called to mind that this latter was first published in *Graham's Magazine* for April, 1841. Some years ago, the Paris *Charivari* copied my story with complimentary comments, objecting, however, to the Rue Morgue on the ground that no such street (to the *Charivari's* knowledge) existed in Paris. I do not wish, of course, to look upon M. Sue's adaptation of my property in any other light than that of a compliment. The similarity may have been entirely accidental.

### CXI

Has any one observed the excessively close resemblance in subject, thought, general manner, and particular point, which this clever composition<sup>1</sup> bears to the *Hudibras* of Butler?

### CXII

The *a priori* reasoners upon government are, of all plausible people, the most preposterous. They only argue too cleverly to permit my thinking them silly enough to be themselves deceived by their own arguments. Yet even this is possible; for there is some-

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<sup>1</sup> The *Satyre Menippée*.



## Marginalia

thing in the vanity of logic which addles a man's brains. Your true logician gets, in time, to be logicalized, and then, so far as regards himself, the universe is one word. A thing, for him, no longer exists. He deposits upon a sheet of paper a certain assemblage of syllables, and fancies that their meaning is riveted by the act of deposition. I am serious in the opinion that some such process of thought passes through the mind of the "practiced" logician, as he makes note of the thesis proposed. He is not aware that he thinks in this way, but, unwittingly, he so thinks. The syllables deposited acquire, in his view, a new character. While afloat in his brain, he might have been brought to admit the possibility that these syllables were variable exponents of various phases of thought; but he will not admit this if he once gets them upon the paper.

In a single page of "Mill" I find the word "force" employed four times; and each employment varies the idea. The fact is, that a *priori* argument is much worse than useless except in the mathematical sciences, where it is possible to obtain precise meanings. If there is any one subject in the world to which it is utterly and radically inapplicable, that subject is Government. The identical arguments used to sustain Mr. Bentham's positions, might, with little exercise of ingenuity, be made to overthrow them; and, by ringing small changes on the words "leg-of-mutton" and "turnip" (changes so gradual as to escape detection),

## Marginalia

I could "demonstrate" that a turnip was, is, and of right ought to be, a leg-of-mutton.

### CXIII

The concord of sound-and-sense principle was never better exemplified than in these lines <sup>1</sup>:

Ast amans charæ thalamum puellæ  
Deserit flens, et tibi verba dicit  
Aspera amplexu teneræ cupito a—  
—vulsus amicæ.

### CXIV

Miss Gould has much in common with Mary Howitt, the characteristic trait of each being a sportive, quaint, epigrammatic grace that keeps clear of the absurd by never employing itself upon very exalted topics. The verbal style of the two ladies is identical. Miss Gould has the more talent of the two, but is somewhat the less original. She has occasional flashes of a far higher order of merit than appertains to her ordinary manner. Her *Dying Storm* might have been written by Campbell.

### CXV

Cornelius Webbe is one of the best of that numerous school of extravaganzists who sprang from the ruins of Lamb. We must be in perfectly good humor, however, with ourselves and all the world, to be much

<sup>1</sup> By M. Anton. Flaminus.

## Marginalia

pleased with such works as *The Man About Town*, in which the harum-scarum, hyperexcursive mannerism is carried to an excess which is frequently fatiguing.

### CXVI

Nearly, if not quite, the best Essay on a Future State.<sup>1</sup> The arguments called "Deductions from our Reason" are, rightly enough, addressed more to the feelings (a vulgar term not to be done without) than to our reason. The arguments deduced from revelation are (also rightly enough) brief. The pamphlet proves nothing, of course; its theorem is not to be proved.

### CXVII

The style is so involute<sup>2</sup> that one cannot help fancying it must be falsely constructed. If the use of language is to convey ideas, then it is nearly as much a demerit that our words seem to be, as that they are, indefensible. A man's grammar, like Cæsar's wife, must not only be pure, but above suspicion of impurity.

### CXVIII

It is the curse of a certain order of mind that it can never rest satisfied with the consciousness of its ability to do a thing. Not even is it content with doing it. It must both know and show how it was done.

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<sup>1</sup> A sermon on a future state, combating the opinion that "death is an eternal sleep." By Gilbert Austin. London. 1794.

<sup>2</sup> *Night and Morning*.

## Marginalia

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### CXIX

Not so: a gentleman with a pug nose is a contradiction in terms. "Who can live idly and without manual labor, and will bear the port, charge, and countenance of a gentleman."—SIR THOMAS SMITH'S *Commonwealth of England*.

### CXX

Here is something at which I find it impossible not to laugh<sup>1</sup>; and yet I laugh without knowing why. That incongruity is the principle of non-convulsive laughter is to my mind as clearly demonstrated as any problem in the *Principia Mathematica*; but here I cannot trace the incongruous. It is there, I know. Still I do not see it. In the meantime let me laugh.

### CXXI

"So violent was the state of parties in England, that I was assured by several that the Duke of Marlborough was a coward and Pope a fool."—VOLTAIRE.

Both propositions have since been very seriously entertained, quite independently of all party feeling. That Pope was a fool, indeed seems to be an established point at present with the Crazyites—what else shall I call them?

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of the Book of Jonah into German Hexameters. By J. G. A. Müller. Contained in the *Memorabilien von Paulus*.

## Marginalia

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### CXXII

Imitators are not necessarily unoriginal, except at the exact points of the imitation. Mr. Longfellow, decidedly the most audacious imitator in America, is markedly original, or, in other words, imaginative, upon the whole; and many persons have, from the latter branch of the fact, been at a loss to comprehend, and, therefore, to believe, the former. Keen sensibility of appreciation, that is to say, the poetic sentiment (in distinction from the poetic power) leads almost inevitably to imitation. Thus all great poets have been gross imitators. It is, however, a mere *non distributio medi* hence to infer that all great imitators are poets.

### CXXIII

“With all his faults, however, this author is a man of respectable powers.”

Thus discourses, of William Godwin, the *London Monthly Magazine*, May, 1818.

### CXXIV

As a descriptive poet, Mr. Street is to be highly commended. He not only describes with force and fidelity, giving us a clear conception of the thing described, but never describes what, to the poet, should be nondescript. He appears, however, not at any time to have been aware that mere description is not

## Marginalia

poetry at all. We demand creation, ποιησις. About Mr. Street there seems to be no spirit. He is all matter, substance—what the chemist would call “simple substance,” and exceedingly simple it is.

### CXXV

I never read a personally abusive paragraph in the newspapers without calling to mind the pertinent query propounded by Johnson to Goldsmith, “My dear Doctor, what harm does it do a man to call him ‘Holofernes’?”

### CXXVI

Were I to consign these volumes,<sup>1</sup> altogether, to the hands of any very young friend of mine, I could not, in conscience, describe them otherwise than as *tam multī, tam grandes, tam pretiosi cōdices* and it would grieve me much to add the *incendite omnes illas membranas*.<sup>2</sup>

### CXXVII

In reading some books we occupy ourselves chiefly with the thoughts of the author; in perusing others, exclusively with our own. And this<sup>3</sup> is one of the “others,”—a suggestive book. But there are two classes of suggestive books, the positively and the negatively suggestive. The former suggest by what

<sup>1</sup> Of Voltaire.

<sup>2</sup> St. Austin, *De Libris Manichæis*.

<sup>3</sup> Mercier's *L'an deux mille quatre cents quarante*.



## Marginalia

they say; the latter by what they might and should have said. It makes little difference, after all. In either case the true book-purpose is answered.

### CXXVIII

It is observable that, in his brief account of the Creation, Moses employs the words, *Bara Elohim* (the Gods created), no less than thirty times, using the noun in the plural with the verb in the singular. Elsewhere, however, in Deuteronomy, for example, he employs the singular, *Eloah*.

### CXXIX

It is a thousand pities that the puny witticisms of a few professional objectors should have power to prevent, even for a year, the adoption of a name for our country. At present we have, clearly, none. There should be no hesitation about "Appalachia." In the first place, it is distinctive. "America"<sup>1</sup> is not, and can never be made so. We may legislate as much as we please, and assume for our country whatever name we think right, but to us it will be no name, to any purpose for which a name is needed, unless we can take it away from the regions which employ it at present. South America is "America," and will insist

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Field, in a meeting of the New York Historical Society, proposed that we take the name of "America," and bestow "Columbia" upon the continent.

## Marginalia

upon remaining so. In the second place "Appalachia" is indigenous, springing from one of the most magnificent and distinctive features of the country itself. Thirdly, in employing this word we do honor to the aborigines, whom, hitherto, we have at all points unmercifully despoiled, assassinated, and dishonored. Fourthly, the name is the suggestion of, perhaps, the most deservedly eminent among all the pioneers of American literature. It is but just that Mr. Irving should name the land for which, in letters, he first established a name. The last, and by far the most truly important consideration of all, however, is the music of "Appalachia" itself; nothing could be more sonorous, more liquid, or of fuller volume, while its length is just sufficient for dignity. How the guttural "Alleghania" could ever have been preferred for a moment is difficult to conceive. I yet hope to find "Appalachia" assumed.

### CXXX

*The British Spy* of Wirt seems an imitation of the *Turkish Spy*, upon which Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* are also based. Marana's work was in Italian—Dr. Johnson errs.

### CXXXI

M——, as a matter of course, would rather be abused by the critics than not be noticed by them at

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all; but he is hardly to be blamed for growling a little, now and then, over their criticisms, just as a dog might do if pelted with bones.

### CXXXII

About the *Antigone*, as about all the ancient plays, there seems to me a certain baldness, the result of inexperience in art, but which pedantry would force us to believe the result of a studied and supremely artistic simplicity. Simplicity, indeed, is a very important feature in all true art, but not the simplicity which we see in the Greek drama. That of the Greek sculpture is everything that can be desired, because here the art in itself is simplicity in itself and in its elements. The Greek sculptor chiselled his forms from what he saw before him every day, in a beauty nearer to perfection than any work of any Cleomenes in the world. But in the drama, the direct, straightforward, un-German Greek had no nature so immediately presented from which to make a copy. He did what he could, but I do not hesitate to say that that was exceedingly little worth. The profound sense of one or two tragic, or rather, melodramatic elements, such as the idea of inexorable destiny,—this sense gleaming at intervals from out the darkness of the ancient stage, serves, in the very imperfection of its development, to show, not the dramatic ability, but the dramatic inability of the ancients. In a word, the simple arts

## Marginalia

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spring into perfection at their origin; the complex as inevitably demand the long and painfully progressive experience of ages. To the Greeks, beyond doubt, their drama seemed perfection; it fully answered to them the dramatic end, excitement, and this fact is urged as proof of their drama's perfection in itself. It need only be said, in reply, that their art and their sense of art were, necessarily, on a level.

### CXXXIII

That man is not truly brave who is afraid either to seem or to be, when it suits him, a coward.

### CXXXIV

A corrupt and impious heart, a merely prurient fancy, a Saturnian brain in which invention has only the phosphorescent glimmer of rottenness.<sup>1</sup> Worthless, body and soul, a foul reproach to the nation that engendered and endures him, a fetid battener upon the garbage of thought,—no man, a beast, a pig. Less scrupulous than a carrion-crow, and not very much less filthy than a Wilmer.

### CXXXV

If ever mortal "wreaked his thoughts upon expression," it was Shelley. If ever a poet sang as a bird sings, earnestly, impulsively, with utter abandonment, to himself solely, and for the mere joy of his own song,

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Masson, author of *Le Cœur d'une Jeune Fille*.

## Marginalia

that poet was the author of *The Sensitive Plant*. Of art, beyond that which is instinctive with genius, he either had little or disdained all. He really disdained that rule which is an emanation from law, because his own soul was law in itself. His rhapsodies are but the rough notes, the stenographic memoranda of poems,—memoranda which, because they were all-sufficient for his own intelligence, he cared not to be at the trouble of writing out in full for mankind. In all his works we find no conception thoroughly wrought. For this reason he is the most fatiguing of poets. Yet he wearies in saying too little rather than too much. What, in him, seems the diffuseness of one idea, is the conglomerate concision of many; and this species of concision it is which renders him obscure. With such a man to imitate was out of the question. It would have served no purpose; for he spoke to his own spirit alone, which would have comprehended no alien tongue. Thus he was profoundly original. His quaintness arose from intuitive perception of that truth to which Bacon alone has given distinct utterance,—“There is no exquisite beauty which has not some strangeness in its proportions.” But whether obscure, original, or quaint, Shelley had no affectations. He was at all times sincere.

From his ruins there sprang into existence, affronting the heavens, a tottering and fantastic pagoda; in which the salient angles, tipped with mad jangling



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bells, were the idiosyncratic faults of the original; faults which cannot be considered such in view of his purposes, but which are monstrous when we regard his works as addressed to mankind. A "school" arose, if that absurd term must still be employed—a school, a system of rules upon the basis of the Shelley who had none. Young men innumerable, dazzled with the glare and bewildered by the bizarrerie of the lightning that flickered through the clouds of *Alas-*tor had no trouble whatever in heaping up imitative vapors, but, for the lightning, were forced to be content with its spectrum, in which the bizarrerie appeared without the fire. Nor were mature minds unimpressed by the contemplation of a greater and more mature; and thus, gradually into this school of all lawlessness, of obscurity, quaintness, and exaggeration, were interwoven the out-of-place didacticism of Wordsworth, and the more anomalous metaphysicianism of Coleridge. Matters were now fast verging to their worst; and at length, in Tennyson, poetic inconsistency attained its extreme. But it was precisely this extreme (for the greatest truth and the greatest error are scarcely two points in a circle) which, following the law of all extremes, wrought in him (Tennyson) a natural and inevitable revulsion; leading him, first, to contemn, and secondly, to investigate, his early manner, and finally to winnow, from its magnificent elements, the truest and purest of all poetical styles.



## Marginalia

But not even yet is the process complete; and for this reason in part, but chiefly on account of the mere fortuitousness of that mental and moral combination which shall unite in one person (if ever it shall) the Shelley abandon and the Tennysonian poetic sense with the most profound art (based both in instinct and analysis) and the sternest will properly to blend and rigorously to control all—chiefly, I say, because such combination of seeming antagonisms will be only a “happy chance,” the world has never yet seen the noblest poem which, possibly, can be composed.

### CXXXVI

It is not proper (to use a gentle word), nor does it seem courageous, to attack our foe by name in spirit and in effect, so that all the world shall know whom we mean, while we say to ourselves, “I have not attacked this man by name in the eye and according to the letter of the law”; yet how often are men who call themselves gentlemen guilty of this meanness! We need reform at this point of our literary morality; very sorely, too, at another—the system of anonymous reviewing. Not one respectable word can be said in defence of this most unfair, this most despicable and cowardly practice.

### CXXXVII

To vilify a great man is the readiest way in which

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a little man can himself attain greatness. The Crab might never have become a Constellation but for the courage it evinced in nibbling Hercules on the heel.

### CXXXVIII

I hardly know how to account for the repeated failures of John Neal as regards the construction of his works. His art is great and of a high character; but it is massive and undetailed. He seems to be either deficient in a sense of completeness, or unstable in temperament; so that he becomes wearied with his work before getting it done. He always begins well, vigorously, startlingly, proceeds by fits, much at random, now prosing, now gossiping, now running away with his subject, now exciting vivid interest; but his conclusions are sure to be hurried and indistinct; so that the reader, perceiving a falling-off where he expects a climax, is pained, and, closing the book with dissatisfaction, is in no mood to give the author credit for the vivid sensations which have been aroused during the progress of perusal. Of all literary foibles, the most fatal, perhaps, is that of defective climax. Nevertheless, I should be inclined to rank John Neal first, or at all events second, among our men of indisputable genius. Is it or is it not a fact, that the air of a democracy agrees better with mere talent than with genius?

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### CXXXIX

Among the moralists who keep themselves erect by the perpetual swallowing of pokers, it is the fashion to decry the "fashionable" novels. These works have their demerits; but a vast influence which they exert for an undeniable good has never yet been duly considered. "Ingenuos didicisse fideliter libros, emollit mores nec sinit esse feros." Now, the fashionable novels are just the books which most do circulate among the class unfashionable; and their effect in softening the worst callosities, in smoothing the most disgusting asperities of vulgarism, is prodigious. With the herd, to admire and to attempt imitation are the same thing. What if, in this case, the manners imitated are frippery? better frippery than brutality; and, after all, there is little danger that the intrinsic value of the sturdiest iron will be impaired by a coating of even the most diaphanous gilt.

### CXL

The ancients had at least half an idea that we travelled on horseback to heaven. See a passage of Passeri, *De Animæ Transvectione*, quoted by Caylus. See, also, many old tombs.

### CXLI

It is said in Isaiah, respecting Idumea, that "none shall pass through thee for ever and ever." Dr. Keith

## Marginalia

here <sup>1</sup> insists, as usual, upon understanding the passage in its most strictly literal sense. He attempts to prove that neither Burckhardt nor Irby passed through the country, merely penetrating to Petra and returning. And our Mr. John Stephens entered Idumea with the deliberate design of putting the question to test. He wished to see whether it was meant that Idumea should not be passed through, and "accordingly," says he, "I passed through it from one end to the other." Here is error on all sides. In the first place, he was not sufficiently informed in the ancient geography to know that the Idumea which he certainly did pass through is not the Idumea, or Edom, intended in the prophecy, the latter lying much farther eastward. In the next place, whether he did or did not pass through the true Idumea, or whether anybody, of late days, did or did not pass through it, is a point of no consequence either to the proof or to the disproof of the literal fulfilment of the prophecies. For it is quite a mistake on the part of Dr. Keith,—his supposition that travelling through Idumea is prohibited at all.

The words conceived to embrace the prohibition are found in Isaiah xxxiv., 10, and are *Lenetsach, netsachím ēín over bah*, literally, *Lenetsach*, for an eternity; *netsachím*, of eternities; *ēín*, not; *over*, moving about; *bah*, in it. That is to say, for an eternity of eternities (there shall) not (be any one) moving about

<sup>1</sup> *Literal Fulfilment of the Prophecies.*

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in it—not through it. The participle *over* refers to one moving to and fro, or up and down, and is the same term which is translated “current” as an epithet of money, in Genesis xxiii., 16. The prophet means only that there shall be no mark of life in the land, no living being there, no one moving up and down in it. He refers merely to its general abandonment and desolation.

In the same way we have received an erroneous idea of the meaning of Ezexiel xxxv., 7, where the same region is mentioned. The common version runs, “Thus will I make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth,” a sentence which Dr. Keith views as he does the one from Isaiah; that is, he supposes it to forbid any travelling in Idumea under penalty of death, instancing Burckhardt’s death, shortly after his return, as confirming this supposition, on the ground that he died in consequence of the rash attempt.

Now, the words of Ezekiel are: *Venathati eth-har Seir leshímmamah ushemamah, vehíchrati mímmennu over vasal*; literally, *Venathatí*, and I will give; *eth-har*, the mountain; *Seir*, Seir; *leshímmamah*, for a desolation; *ushemamah*, and a desolation; *vehíchrati*, and I will cut off; *mímmennu*, from it; *over*, him that goeth; *vasal*, and him that returneth;—“and I will give Mount Seir for an utter desolation, and I will cut off from it him that passeth and repasseth therein.” The



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reference here is as in the preceding passage: allusion is made to the inhabitants of the land as moving about in it, and actively employed in the business of life. I am sustained in the translation of *over* *vasal* by Gesenius, S 5, vol. ii., p. 570, *Leo's Trans.* Compare also Zechariah vii., 14 and ix., 8. There is something analogous in the Hebrew-Greek phrase, at Acts ix. 28 καὶ ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν εἰσπορευόμενος καὶ ἐκπορευόμενος ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ—"And he was with them in Jerusalem, coming in and going out." The Latin *versatus est* is precisely paraphrastic. The meaning is that Saul, the new convert, was on intimate terms with the true believers in Jerusalem; moving about among them to and fro, or in and out.

### CXLII

The author of *Cromwell* does better as a writer of ballads than of prose. He has fancy and a fine conception of rhythm. But his romantico-histories have all the effervescence of his verse, without its flavor. Nothing worse than his tone can be invented: turgid sententiousness, involute, spasmodically straining after effect. And, to render matters worse, he is as thoroughly an unistylist as Cardinal Chigi, who boasted that he wrote with the same pen for half a century.

### CXLIII

Our "blues" are increasing in number at a great



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rate; and should be decimated, at the very least. Have we no critic with nerve enough to hang a dozen or two of them, *in terrorem*? He must use a silk cord, of course, as they do in Spain, with all grandees of the blue blood, of the *sangre azul*.

### CXLIV

For all the rhetorician's rules

Teach nothing but to name the tools.—*Hudibras*.

What these oft-quoted lines go to show is, that a falsity in verse will travel faster and endure longer than a falsity in prose. The man who would sneer or stare at a silly proposition nakedly put, will admit that "there is a good deal in that" when "that" is the point of an epigram shot into the ear. The rhetorician's rules, if they are rules, teach him not only to name his tools, but to use his tools, the capacity of his tools, their extent, their limit, and, from an examination of the nature of the tools,—an examination forced on him by their constant presence,—force him, also, into scrutiny and comprehension of the material on which the tools are employed, and thus, finally, suggest and give birth to new material for new tools.

### CXLV

Among his *ídola* of the den, the tribe, the forum, the theatre, etc., Bacon might well have placed the great *ídolon* of the parlor (or of the wit, as I have

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termed it in one of the previous *Marginalia*)—the idol whose worship blinds man to truth by dazzling him with the apposite. But what title could have been invented for that idol which has propagated, perhaps, more of gross error than all combined?—the one, I mean, which demands from its votaries that they reciprocate cause and effect, reason in a circle, lift themselves from the ground by pulling up their pantaloons, and carry themselves on their own heads, in hand-baskets, from Beersheba to Dan.

All, absolutely all the argumentation which I have seen on the nature of the soul, or of the Deity, seems to me nothing but worship of this unnamable idol. "Pour savoir ce qu'est Dieu," says Bielfeld, although nobody listens to the solemn truth, "il faut être Dieu même," and to reason about the reason is of all things the most unreasonable. At least, he alone is fit to discuss the topic who perceives at a glance the insanity of its discussion.

### CXLVI

I believe it is Montaigne who says, "People talk about thinking, but, for my part, I never begin to think until I sit down to write." A better plan for him would have been never to sit down to write until he had made an end of thinking.

### CXLVII

No doubt the association of idea is somewhat singu-

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lar, but I never can hear a crowd of people singing and gesticulating, all together, at an Italian opera, without fancying myself at Athens, listening to that peculiar tragedy by Sophocles in which he introduces a full chorus of turkeys, who set about bewailing the death of Meleager. It is noticeable in this connection, by the way, that there is not a goose in the world who, in point of sagacity, would not feel itself insulted in being compared with a turkey. The French seem to feel this. In Paris, I am sure, no one would think of saying to Mr. F——, "What a goose you are!" *Quel dindon tu es!* would be the phrase employed as equivalent.

### CXLVIII

Alas! how many American critics neglect the happy suggestion of M. Timon—"que le ministre de l'instruction publique doit lui-même savoir parler français."

### CXLIX

It is folly to assert, as some at present are fond of asserting, that the literature of any nation or age was ever injured by plain speaking on the part of the critics. As for American letters, plain-speaking about them is simply the one thing needed. They are in a condition of absolute quagmire—a quagmire, to use the words of Victor Hugo, "d' où on ne peut se tirer par des periphrases—par des quemadmodums et des verumenimveros."

## Marginalia

### CL

It is certainly very remarkable that although destiny is the ruling idea of the Greek drama, the word *Τύχη* (fortune) does not appear once in the whole *Ilíad*.

### CLI

Had John Bornouilli lived to have the experience of Fuller's occiput and sinciput, he would have abandoned, in dismay, his theory of the non-existence of hard bodies.

### CLII

They have ascertained, in China, that the abdomen is the seat of the soul; and the acute Greeks considered it a waste of words to employ more than a single term, *φρένες*, for the expression both of the mind and of the diaphragm.

### CLIII

Mr. Grattan, who, in general, writes well, has a bad habit of loitering, of toying with his subject as a cat with a mouse, instead of grasping it firmly at once and devouring it without ado. He takes up too much time in the anteroom. He has never done with his introductions. Sometimes one introduction is merely the vestibule to another; so that by the time he arrives at his main theme there is none of it left. He is afflicted with a perversity common enough even among

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otherwise good talkers, an irrepressible desire of tantalizing by circumlocution.

If the greasy print here exhibited is, indeed, like Mr. Grattan,<sup>1</sup> then is Mr. Grattan like nobody else, for who else ever thrust forth, from beneath a wig of wire, the countenance of an overdone apple-dumpling?

### CLIV

“What does a man learn by travelling?” demanded Doctor Johnson, one day, in a great rage. “What did Lord Charlemont learn in his travels, except that there was a snake in one of the pyramids of Egypt?”—but had Doctor Johnson lived in the days of the Silk Buckinghams, he would have seen that, so far from thinking anything of finding a snake in a pyramid, your traveller would take his oath, at a moment’s notice, of having found a pyramid in a snake.

### CLV

The author of *Miserrimus* might have been W. G. Simms (whose *Martin Faber* is just such a work); but is<sup>2</sup> G. M. W. Reynolds, an Englishman, who wrote, also, *Albert de Rosann* and *Pickwick Abroad*,—both excellent things in their way.

### CLVI

L—— is busy in attempting to prove that his play

<sup>1</sup> *Highways and Byways*.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Poe was wrong. *Miserrimus* was written by W. M. Reynolds, who died at Fontainebleau in 1850.—Ed.

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was not fairly d——d, that it is only “skotched, not killed”; but if the poor play could speak from the tomb I fancy it would sing with the opera heroine,

The flattering error cease to prove!  
Oh, let me be deceased!

### CLVII

We may safely grant that the effects of the oratory of Demosthenes were vaster than those wrought by the eloquence of any modern, and yet not controvert the idea that the modern eloquence, itself, is superior to that of the Greek. The Greeks were an excitable, unread race, for they had no printed books. *Vivâ voce* exhortations carried with them, to their quick apprehensions, all the gigantic force of the new. They had much of that vivid interest which the first fable has upon the dawning intellect of the child—an interest which is worn away by the frequent perusal of similar things, by the frequent inception of similar fancies. The suggestions, the arguments, the incitements of the ancient rhetorician were, when compared with those of the modern, absolutely novel, possessing thus an immense adventitious force—a force which has been, oddly enough, left out of sight in all estimates of the eloquence of the two eras.

The finest philippic of the Greek would have been hooted at in the British House of Peers, while an impromptu of Sheridan, or of Brougham, would have





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Eng<sup>d</sup> by J. I. Pease





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carried by storm all the hearts and all the intellects of Athens.

### CLVIII

Much has been said of late about the necessity of maintaining a proper nationality in American letters; but what this nationality is, or what is to be gained by it, has never been distinctly understood. That an American should confine himself to American themes, or even prefer them, is rather a political than a literary idea, and at best is a questionable point. We would do well to bear in mind that "distance lends enchantment to the view." *Ceteris paribus*, a foreign theme is, in a strictly literary sense, to be preferred. After all, the world at large is the only legitimate stage for the authorial *histrío*.

But of the need of that nationality which defends our own literature, sustains our own men of letters, upholds our own dignity, and depends upon our own resources, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt. Yet here is the very point at which we are most supine. We complain of our want of international copyright on the ground that this want justifies our publishers in inundating us with British opinion in British books; and yet when these very publishers, at their own obvious risk, and even obvious loss, do publish an American book, we turn up our noses at it with supreme contempt (this is a general thing) until it (the American book) has been dubbed "readable" by some illiterate

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Cockney critic. Is it too much to say that, with us, the opinion of Washington Irving, of Prescott, of Bryant, is a mere nullity in comparison with that of any anonymous sub-sub-editor of the *Spectator*, the *Athenæum*, or the London *Punch*? It is not saying too much to say this. It is a solemn, an absolutely awful fact. Every publisher in the country will admit it to be a fact. There is not a more disgusting spectacle under the sun than our subserviency to British criticism. It is disgusting, first, because it is truckling, servile, pusillanimous; secondly, because of its gross irrationality. We know the British to bear us little but ill-will; we know that, in no case, do they utter unbiased opinions of American books; we know that in the few instances in which our writers have been treated with common decency in England, these writers have either openly paid homage to English institutions, or have had lurking at the bottom of their hearts a secret principle at war with democracy; we know all this, and yet, day after day, submit our necks to the degrading yoke of the crudest opinion that emanates from the fatherland. Now, if we must have nationality, let it be a nationality that will throw off this yoke.

The chief of the rhapsodists who have ridden us to death like the Old Man of the Mountain, is the ignorant and egotistical Wilson. We use the term "rhapsodists" with perfect deliberation; for, Macaulay and Dilke



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and one or two others excepted, there is not in Great Britain a critic who can be fairly considered worthy the name. The Germans, and even the French, are infinitely superior. As regards Wilson, no man ever penned worse criticism or better rhodomontade. That he is "egotistical" his works show to all men, running as they read. That he is "ignorant" let his absurd and continuous schoolboy blunders about Homer bear witness. Not long ago we ourselves pointed out a series of similar inanities in his review of Miss Barrett's poems,—a series, we say, of gross blunders, arising from sheer ignorance,—and we defy him or any one to answer a single syllable of what we then advanced.

And yet this is the man whose simple dictum (to our shame be it spoken) has the power to make or to mar any American reputation! In the last number of *Blackwood* he has a continuation of the dull *Specimens of the British Critics*, and makes occasion wantonly to insult one of the noblest of our poets, Mr. Lowell. The point of the whole attack consists in the use of slang epithets and phrases of the most ineffably vulgar description. "Squabashes" is a pet term. "Faugh!" is another. "We are Scotsmen to the spine!" says Sawney, as if the thing were not more than self-evident. Mr. Lowell is called a "magpie," an "ape," a "Yankee cockney," and his name is intentionally miswritten *John Russell Lowell*. Now,

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were these indecencies perpetrated by an American critic, that critic would be sent to Coventry by the whole press of the country; but, since it is Wilson who insults, we, as in duty bound, not only submit to the insult, but echo it as an excellent jest throughout the length and breadth of the land. *Quamdiu Catilina?* We do indeed demand the nationality of self-respect. In letters as in government we require a Declaration of Independence. A better thing still would be a Declaration of War—and that war should be carried forthwith “into Africa.”

### CLIX

*The Doctor* has excited great attention in America as well as in England, and has given rise to every variety of conjecture and opinion, not only concerning the author's individuality, but in relation to the meaning, purpose, and character of the book itself. It is now said to be the work of one author, now of two, three, four, five—as far even as nine or ten. These writers are sometimes thought to have composed *The Doctor* conjointly, sometimes to have written each a portion. These individual portions have even been pointed out by the supremely acute, and the names of their respective fathers assigned. Supposed discrepancies of taste and manner, together with the prodigal introduction of mottoes and other scraps of erudition (apparently beyond the compass of a single individ-

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ual's reading), have given rise to this idea of a multiplicity of writers, among whom are mentioned in turn all the most witty, all the most eccentric, and especially all the most learned of Great Britain. Again, in regard to the nature of the book. It has been called an imitation of Sterne, an august and most profound exemplification, under the garb of eccentricity, of some all-important moral law, a true, under guise of a fictitious, biography, a simple *jeu d'esprit*, a mad farrago by a Bedlamite, and a great multiplicity of other equally fine names and hard. Undoubtedly, the best method of arriving at a decision in relation to a work of this nature is to read it through with attention, and thus see what can be made of it. We have done so, and can make nothing of it, and are therefore clearly of opinion that *The Doctor* is precisely—nothing. We mean to say that it is nothing better than a hoax.

That any serious truth is meant to be inculcated by a tissue of bizarre and disjointed rhapsodies, whose general meaning no person can fathom, is a notion altogether untenable, unless we suppose the author a madman. But there are none of the proper evidences of madness in the book; while of mere banter there are instances innumerable. One half, at least, of the entire publication is taken up with palpable quizzes, reasonings in a circle, sentences, like the nonsense verses of Du Bartas, evidently framed to mean nothing, while wearing an air of profound thought, and

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grotesque speculations in regard to the probable excitement to be created by the book.

It appears to have been written with a sole view (or nearly with the sole view) of exciting inquiry and comment. That this object should be fully accomplished cannot be thought very wonderful, when we consider the excessive trouble taken to accomplish it, by vivid and powerful intellect. That *The Doctor* is the offspring of such intellect is proved sufficiently by many passages of the book, where the writer appears to have been led off from his main design. That it is written by more than one man should not be deduced either from the apparent immensity of its erudition, or from discrepancies of style. That man is a desperate mannerist who cannot vary his style *ad infinitum* ; and although the book may have been written by a number of learned *bibliophagi*, still there is, we think, nothing to be found in the book itself at variance with the possibility of its being written by any one individual of even mediocre reading. Erudition is only certainly known in its total results. The mere grouping together of mottoes from the greatest multiplicity of the rarest works, or even the apparently natural in-weaving into any composition of the sentiments and manner of these works, are attainments within the reach of any well-informed, ingenious, and industrious man having access to the great libraries of London. Moreover, while a single individual possess-

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ing these requisites and opportunities, might, through a rabid desire of creating a sensation, have written, with some trouble, *The Doctor*, it is by no means easy to imagine that a plurality of sensible persons could be found willing to embark in such absurdity from a similar, or indeed from any imaginable inducement.

The present edition of the Harpers consists of two volumes in one. Volume one commences with a "Prelude of Mottoes" occupying two pages. Then follows a "Postscript," then a "Table of Contents" to the first volume, occupying eighteen pages. Volume two has a similar "Prelude of Mottoes" and "Table of Contents." The whole is subdivided into "Chapters Ante-Initial," "Initial," and "Post-Initial," with "Inter-Chapters." The pages have now and then a typographical "queerity"—a monogram, a scrap of grotesque music, old English, etc. Some characters of this latter kind are printed with colored ink in the British edition, which is gotten up with great care. All these oddities are in the manner of Sterne, and some of them are exceedingly well conceived. The work professes to be a "Life of one Doctor Daniel Dove and his horse Nobs"; but we should put no very great faith in this biography. On the back of the book is a monogram, which appears again once or twice in the text, and whose solution is a fertile source of trouble with all readers. This monogram is a triangular pyramid; and, as in geometry, the solidity of every



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polyhedral body may be computed by dividing the body into pyramids, the pyramid is thus considered as the base or essence of every polyhedron. The author, then, after his own fashion, may mean to imply that his book is the basis of all solidity or wisdom, or, perhaps, since the polyhedron is not only a solid, but a solid terminated by plane faces, that *The Doctor* is the very essence of all that spurious wisdom which will terminate in just nothing at all—in a hoax, and a consequent multiplicity of black visages. The wit and humor of *The Doctor* have seldom been equalled. We cannot think Southey wrote it, but have no idea who did.

### CLX

These twelve *Letters*<sup>1</sup> are occupied, in part, with minute details of such atrocities on the part of the British, during their sojourn in Charleston, as the quizzing of Mrs. Wilkinson and the pilfering of her shoe-buckles, the remainder being made up of the indignant comments of Mrs. Wilkinson herself.

It is very true, as the preface assures us, that “few records exist of American women either before or during the war of the Revolution, and that those perpetuated by history want the charm of personal narration”; but then we are well delivered from such charms of personal narration as we find here. The

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Eliza Wilkinson, during the Invasion and Possession of Charleston, S. C., by the British, in the Revolutionary War.* Arranged by Caroline Gilman.



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only supposable merit in the compilation is that dogged air of truth with which the fair authoress relates the lamentable story of her misadventures. I look in vain for that "useful information" about which I have heard, unless, indeed, it is in the passage where we are told that the letter-writer "was a young and beautiful widow; that her handwriting is clear and feminine; and that the letters were copied by herself into a blank quarto book, on which the extravagant sale-price marks one of the features of the times": there are other extravagant sale-prices, however, besides that; it was seventy-five cents that I paid for these *Letters*. Besides, they are silly, and I cannot conceive why Mrs. Gilman thought the public wished to read them. It is really too bad for her to talk at a body, in this style, about "gathering relics of past history," and "floating down streams of time."

As for Mrs. Wilkinson, I am rejoiced that she lost her shoe-buckles.

### CLXI

"Advancing briskly with a rapier, he did the business for him at a blow."—SMOLLETT.

This vulgar colloquialism had its type among the Romans. "Et ferro subitus grassatus, agit rem." JUVENAL.

### CLXII

It cannot, we think, be a matter of doubt with any reflecting mind, that at least one third of the reverence,

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or of the affection, with which we regard the elder poets of Great Britain should be credited to what is, in itself, a thing apart from poetry—we mean to the simple love of the antique; and that again a third of even the proper poetic sentiment inspired by these writings should be ascribed to a fact which, while it has a strict connection with poetry in the abstract, and also with the particular poems in question, must not be looked upon as a merit appertaining to the writers of the poems. Almost every devout reader of the old English bards, if demanded his opinion of their productions, would mention vaguely, yet with perfect sincerity, a sense of dreamy, wild, indefinite, and, he would perhaps say, undefinable delight. Upon being required to point out the source of this so shadowy pleasure, he would be apt to speak of the quaint in phraseology and of the grotesque in rhythm. And this quaintness and grotesqueness are, as we have elsewhere endeavored to show, very powerful, and, if well managed, very admissible adjuncts to ideality. But in the present instance they arise independently of the author's will and are matters apart from his intention.

### CLXIII

As to this last term ("high-binder"), which is so confidently quoted as modern ("not in use, certainly, before 1819"), I can refute all that is said by referring to a journal in my own possession, the *Weekly In-*

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*spector*, for December 27, 1806, published in New York:

"On Christmas Eve, a party of banditti, amounting, it is stated, to forty or fifty members of an association calling themselves 'High-Binders,' assembled in front of St. Peter's Church in Barclay Street, expecting that the Catholic ritual would be performed with a degree of pomp and splendor which has usually been omitted in this city. These ceremonies, however, not taking place, the High-Binders manifested great displeasure."

In a subsequent number the association are called "Hide-Binders." They were Irish.

### CLXIV

Perhaps Mr. Barrow<sup>1</sup> is right after all, and the dearth of genius in America is owing to the continual teasing of the mosquitoes.

### CLXV

The title of this book<sup>2</sup> deceives us. It is by no means "talk" as men understand it, not that true talk of which Boswell has been the best historiographer. In a word, it is not gossip, which has been never better defined than by Basil, who calls it "talk for talk's sake," nor more thoroughly comprehended

<sup>1</sup> *Voyage to Cochín China*.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge's *Table-Talk*.

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than by Horace Walpole and Mary Wortley Montagu, who made it a profession and a purpose. Embracing all things, it has neither beginning, middle, nor end. Thus of the gossip it was not properly said that "he commences his discourse by jumping *in medias res*." For, clearly, your gossip commences not at all. He is begun. He is already begun. He is always begun. In the matter of end he is indeterminate. And by these extremes shall ye know him to be of the Cæsars—*porphyrogenitus*, of the right vein, of the true blood—of the blue blood—of the *sangre azul*. As for laws, he is cognizant of but one, the invariable absence of all. And for his road, were it as straight as the Appia and as broad as that "which leadeth to destruction," nevertheless would he be malcontent without a frequent hop-skip-and-jump over the hedges into the tempting pastures of digression beyond. Such is the gossip, and of such alone is the true "talk." But when Coleridge asked Lamb if he had ever heard him preach, the answer was quite happy, "I have never heard you do anything else." The truth is that "Table Discourse" might have answered as a title to this book; but its character can be fully conveyed only in "Post-Prandial Sub-Sermons" or "Three Bottle Sermonoids."

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"It is now full time to begin to brush away the insects of literature, whether creeping or fluttering, which have too long crawled over and soiled the intellectual ground of this country. It is high time to shake the little sickly stems of many a puny plant, and make its fading flowerets fall."—*Monthly Register*, p. 243, vol. ii., New York, 1807.

On the other hand:

"I have brushed away the insects of literature, whether fluttering or creeping; I have shaken the little stems of many a puny plant, and the flowerets have fallen."—"Preface" to the *Pursuits of Literature*.

### CLXVII

Men of genius are far more abundant than is supposed. In fact, to appreciate thoroughly the work of what we call genius is to possess all the genius by which the work was produced. But the person appreciating may be utterly incompetent to reproduce the work, or anything similar, and this solely through lack of what may be termed the constructive ability, a matter quite independent of what we agree to understand in the term "genius" itself. This ability is based, to be sure, in great part, upon the faculty of analysis, enabling the artist to get full view of the machinery of his proposed effect, and thus work it and

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regulate it at will; but a great deal depends also upon properties strictly moral; for example, upon patience, upon concentrativeness, or the power of holding the attention steadily to the one purpose, upon self-dependence and contempt for all opinion which is opinion and no more—in especial, upon energy or industry. So vitally important is this last, that it may well be doubted if anything to which we have been accustomed to give the title of a “work of genius” was ever accomplished without it; and it is chiefly because this quality and genius are nearly incompatible that “works of genius” are few, while mere men of genius are, as I say, abundant. The Romans, who excelled us in acuteness of observation while falling below us in induction from facts observed, seem to have been so fully aware of the inseparable connection between industry and a “work of genius” as to have adopted the error that industry, in great measure, was genius itself. The highest compliment is intended by a Roman, when, of an epic, or anything similar, he says that it is written *industria mirabilí* or *incredibilí industria*.

### CLXVIII

The merely mechanical style of *Athens* is far better than that of any of Bulwer's previous books. In general he is atrociously involute—this is his main defect. He wraps one sentence in another *ad infinitum*, very much in the fashion of those “nests of boxes” sold

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in our woodenware shops, or like the islands within lakes, within islands within lakes, within islands within lakes, of which we read so much in the *Periplus* of Hanno.

### CLXIX

All true men must rejoice to perceive the decline of the miserable rant and cant against originality, which was so much in vogue a few years ago among a class of microscopical critics, and which at one period threatened to degrade all American literature to the level of Flemish art.

Of puns it has been said that those most dislike who are least able to utter them; but with far more of truth may it be asserted that invectives against originality proceed only from persons at once hypocritical and commonplace. I say "hypocritical," for the love of novelty is an indisputable element of the moral nature of man; and since to be original is merely to be novel, the dolt who professes a distaste for originality, in letters or elsewhere, proves in no degree his aversion for the thing in itself, but merely that uncomfortable hatred which ever arises in the heart of an envious man for an excellence he cannot attain.

### CLXX

When I call to mind the preposterous "asides" and soliloquies of the drama among civilized nations, the shifts employed by the Chinese playwrights appear

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altogether respectable. If a general, on a Pekin or Canton stage, is ordered on an expedition, "he brandishes a whip," says Davis, "or takes in his hand the reins of a bridle, and striding three or four times around a platform, in the midst of a tremendous crash of gongs, drums, and trumpets, finally stops short and tells the audience where he has arrived." It would sometimes puzzle an European stage hero in no little degree to "tell an audience where he has arrived." Most of them seem to have a very imperfect conception of their whereabouts. In the *Mort de Cæsar*, for example, Voltaire makes his populace rush to and fro, exclaiming, "*Courons au Capitole !*" Poor fellows—they are in the capitol all the time; in his scruples about unity of place the author has never once let them out of it.

### CLXXI

Sallust, too. He had much the same free-and-easy idea, and Metternich himself could not have quarrelled with his "*Impune quæ libet facile, id est esse regem.*"

### CLXXII

A ballad entitled *Indian Serenade*, and put into the mouth of the hero, Vasco Nunez, is, perhaps, the most really meritorious portion of Mr. Simms's *Damsel of Darien*. This stanza is full of music:



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And their wild and mellow voices  
Still to hear along the deep,  
Every brooding star rejoices,  
While the billow, on its pillow,  
Lulled to silence seems to sleep.

And also this:

'T is the wail for life they waken  
By Samana's yielding shore—  
With the tempest it is shaken;  
The wild ocean is in motion,  
And the song is heard no more.

### CLXXIII

“Here is a man who is a scholar and an artist, who knows precisely how every effect has been produced by every great writer, and who is resolved to reproduce them. But the heart passes by his pitfalls and traps and carefully planned springes, to be taken captive by some simple fellow who expected the event as little as did his prisoner.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps I err in quoting these words as the author's own—they are in the mouth of one of his interlocutors; but whoever claims them, they are poetical and no more. The error is exactly that common one of separating practice from the theory which includes it. In all cases, if the practice fail, it is because the theory is imperfect. If Mr. Lowell's heart be not caught in the pitfall or trap, then the pitfall is ill-concealed and

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<sup>1</sup> Lowell's *Conversations*.

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the trap is not properly baited or set. One who has some artistical ability may know how to do a thing, and even show how to do it, and yet fail in doing it after all; but the artist and the man of some artistic ability must not be confounded. He only is the former who can carry his most shadowy precepts into successful application. To say that a critic could not have written the work which he criticises, is to put forth a contradiction in terms.

### CLXXIV

Talking of conundrums: Why will a geologist put no faith in the fable of the fox that lost his tail? Because he knows that no animal remains have ever been found in trap.

### CLXXV

We have long learned to reverence the fine intellect of Bulwer. We take up any production of his pen with a positive certainty that, in reading it, the wildest passions of our nature, the most profound of our thoughts, the brightest visions of our fancy, and the most ennobling and lofty of our aspirations will, in due turn, be kindled within us. We feel sure of rising from the perusal a wiser if not a better man. In no instance are we deceived. From the brief tale, from the *Monos and Daímonos* of the author to his most ponderous and labored novels, all is richly and glowingly intellectual, all is energetic, or astute, or brilliant, or pro-

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found. There may be men now living who possess the power of Bulwer, but it is quite evident that very few have made that power so palpably manifest. Indeed, we know of none. Viewing him as a novelist, a point of view exceedingly unfavorable (if we hold to the common acceptation of "the novel") for a proper contemplation of his genius, he is unsurpassed by any writer living or dead. Why should we hesitate to say this, feeling, as we do, thoroughly persuaded of its truth? Scott has excelled him in many points, and *The Bride of Lammermoor* is a better book than any individual work by the author of *Pelham*; *Ivanhoe* is, perhaps, equal to any. Descending to particulars, D'Israeli has a more brilliant, a more lofty, and a more delicate (we do not say a wilder) imagination. Lady Dacre has written *Ellen Wareham*, a more forcible tale of passion. In some species of wit Theodore Hook rivals, and in broad humor our own Paulding surpasses him. The writer of *Godolphin* equals him in energy. Banim is a better sketcher of character. Hope is a richer colorist. Captain Trelawney is as original, Moore is as fanciful, and Horace Smith is as learned. But who is there uniting in one person the imagination, the passion, the humor, the energy, the knowledge of the heart, the artist-like eye, the originality, the fancy, and the learning of Edward Lytton Bulwer? In a vivid wit, in profundity and a Gothic massiveness of thought, in style, in a calm certainty

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and definitiveness of purpose, in industry, and, above all, in the power of controlling and regulating by volition his illimitable faculties of mind, he is unequalled, he is unapproached.

### CLXXVI

The author of *Richelieu* and *Darnley* is lauded, by a great majority of those who laud him, from mere motives of duty, not of inclination—duty erroneously conceived. He is looked upon as the head and representative of those novelists who, in historical romance, attempt to blend interest with instruction. His sentiments are found to be pure, his morals unquestionable and pointedly shown forth, his language indisputably correct. And for all this, praise, assuredly, but then only a certain degree of praise, should be awarded him. To be pure in his expressed opinions is a duty; and were his language as correct as any spoken, he would speak only as every gentleman should speak. In regard to his historical information, were it much more accurate and twice as extensive as, from any visible indications, we have reason to believe it, it should still be remembered that similar attainments are possessed by many thousands of well-educated men of all countries, who look upon their knowledge with no more than ordinary complacency; and that a far, very far higher reach of erudition is within the grasp of any general reader having access to the great libraries of

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Paris or the Vatican. Something more than we have mentioned is necessary to place our author upon a level with the best of the English novelists, for here his admirers would desire us to place him. Had Sir Walter Scott never existed, and *Waverley* never been written, we would not, of course, award Mr. J. the merit of being the first to blend history, even successfully, with fiction. But as an indifferent imitator of the Scotch novelist in this respect, it is unnecessary to speak of the author of *Richelieu* any farther. To genius of any kind it seems to us that he has little pretension. In the solemn tranquillity of his pages we seldom stumble across a novel emotion, and if any matter of deep interest arises in the path, we are pretty sure to find it an interest appertaining to some historical fact equally vivid or more so in the original chronicles.

### CLXXVII

Jack Birkenhead, *apud* Bishop Sprat, says that "a great wit's great work is to refuse." The apothegm must be swallowed *cum grano salis*. His greatest work is to originate no matter that shall require refusal.

### CLXXVIII

"Frequently since his recent death," says the American editor of Hood, "he has been called a great author, a phrase used not inconsiderately or in vain." Yet, if we adopt the conventional idea of "a great



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author," there has lived, perhaps, no writer of the last half-century who, with equal notoriety, was less entitled than Hood to be so called. In fact, he was a literary merchant, whose main stock in trade was littleness; for, during the larger portion of his life he seemed to breathe only for the purpose of perpetrating puns—things of so despicable a platitude that the man who is capable of habitually committing them, is seldom found capable of anything else. Whatever merit may be discovered in a pun arises altogether from unexpectedness. This is the pun's element, and is two-fold. First, we demand that the combination of the pun be unexpected; and, secondly, we require the most entire unexpectedness in the pun *per se*. A rare pun, rarely appearing, is, to a certain extent, a pleasurable effect; but to no mind, however debased in taste, is a continuous effort at punning otherwise than unendurable. The man who maintains that he derives gratification from any such chapters of punnage as Hood was in the daily habit of committing to paper should not be credited upon oath.

The puns of the author of *Fair Inez*, however, are to be regarded as the weak points of the man. Independently of their ill effect, in a literary view, as mere puns, they leave upon us a painful impression; for too evidently are they the hypochondriac's struggles at mirth, the grinnings of the death's-head. No one can read his *Literary Reminiscences* without being con-





## Marginalia

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## Marginalia

vinced of his habitual despondency; and the species of false wit in question is precisely of that character which would be adopted by an author of Hood's temperament and cast of intellect, when compelled to write at an emergency. That his heart had no interest in these *niaiserie*s is clear. I allude, of course, to his mere puns for the pun's sake, a class of letters by which he obtained his widest renown. That he did more in this way than in any other is but a corollary from what I have already said, for, generally, he was unhappy, and almost continually he wrote *invita Minerva*. But his true province was a very rare and ethereal humor, in which the mere pun was left out of sight, or took the character of the richest grotesquerie, impressing the imaginative reader with remarkable force, as if by a new phase of the ideal. It is in this species of brilliant, or, rather, glowing grotesquerie, uttered with a rushing abandon vastly heightening its effect, that Hood's marked originality mainly consisted; and it is this which entitles him, at times, to the epithet "great," for that undeniably may be considered great (of whatever seeming littleness in itself) which is capable of inducing intense emotion in the minds or hearts of those who are themselves undeniably great.

The field in which Hood is distinctive is a borderland between fancy and fantasy. In this region he reigns supreme. Nevertheless, he has made successful and frequent incursions, although vacillatingly,

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into the domain of the true imagination. I mean to say that he is never truly or purely imaginative for more than a paragraph at a time. In a word, his peculiar genius was the result of vivid fancy impelled by hypochondriasis.

<sup>1</sup> In his wild *Ode to Melancholy* we perceive this result in the very clearest of manifestations. Few things have ever more deeply affected us than the passages which follow:

O clasp me, sweet, whilst thou art mine,  
And do not take my tears amiss;  
For tears must flow to wash away  
A thought that shows so stern as this.  
Forgive, if somehow I forget,  
In woe to come, the present bliss;  
As frightened Proserpine let fall  
Her flowers at the sight of Dis,  
Even so the dark and bright will kiss,  
The sunniest things throw sternest shade,  
And there is even a happiness  
That makes the heart afraid!

All things are touched with melancholy,  
Born of the secret soul's mistrust,  
To feel her fair ethereal wings  
Weigh down with vile degraded dust;  
Even the bright extremes of joy  
Bring on conclusions of disgust,

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<sup>1</sup> The following notes on Hood, not hitherto reprinted in America, consist of those portions of two magazine articles which Poe did not use in the preceding passage, or in the lecture on *The Poetic Principle*.



## Marginalia

Like the sweet blossoms of the May,  
Whose fragrance ends in must.  
O give her, then, her tribute just,  
Her sighs and tears, and musings holy!  
There is no music in the life  
That sounds with idiot laughter solely;  
There 's not a string attuned to mirth  
But has its chords of melancholy.

*The Dream of Eugene Aram* is too well known in America to need comment from us. It has more of true imagination than almost any other composition of its author; but even when engaged on so serious a subject he found great difficulty in keeping aloof from the grotesque,—the result, we say, of warm fancy impelled by hypochondriasis. The opening stanza affords an example:

'T was in the prime of summer time,  
An evening calm and cool,  
When four-and-twenty happy boys  
Came bounding out of school;  
There were some that ran, and some that leapt  
Like troutlets in a pool.

The twenty-fourth stanza approaches more nearly the imaginative spirit than any passage in the poem, but the taint of the fantastical is over it still:

And peace went with them one and all,  
And each calm pillow spread;

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But guilt was my grim chamberlain,  
That lighted me to bed,  
And drew my midnight curtains round,  
With fingers bloody red!

*Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg* is, perhaps, more thoroughly characteristic of Hood's genius than any single thing which he has written. It is quite a long poem, comprising nearly three thousand lines; and its author has evidently labored much with it. Its chief defect is in its versification: for this Hood has no ear; of its principles he knew nothing at all. Not that his verses, individually, are very lame, but that they have no capacity for running together. The reader is continually getting balked, not because the lines are unreadable, but because the lapse of one rhythm to another is so inartistically managed.

The story concerns a very rich heiress who is excessively pampered by her parents, and who at length gets thrown from a horse and so injures a leg as to render amputation inevitable. To supply the place of the true limb, she insists upon a leg of solid gold, a leg of the exact proportions of the original. She puts up with its inconvenience for the sake of the admiration it excites. Its attraction, however, excites the cupidity of a *chevalier d'industrie*, who cajoles her into wedlock, dissipates her fortune, and, finally, purloining her golden leg, dashes out her brains with it, elopes, and puts an end to the story. It is wonderfully well

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told, and abounds in the most brilliant points, embracing something of each of the elementary faculties which we have been discussing, but most especially rich in that which we have termed "fantasy."

The most remarkable poems, however, are those which we have still to speak of. They convey, too, most distinctly the genius of the author; nor can any one thoughtfully read them without a conviction that hitherto that genius has been greatly misconceived, without perceiving that even the wit of Hood had its birth in a taint of melancholy, perhaps hereditary, and nearly amounting to monomania.

*The Song of the Shirt* is such a composition as only Hood could have conceived or written. Its popularity has been unbounded. Its effect arises from that grotesquerie which we have referred to the vivid fancy of the author, impelled by hypochondriasis; but *The Song of the Shirt* has scarcely a claim to the title of *poem*. This, however, is a mere question of words, and can by no means affect the high merit of the composition, to whatever appellation it may be considered entitled.

*The Haunted House* we prefer to any composition of its author. It is a masterpiece of its kind, and that kind belongs to a very lofty, if not to the very loftiest, order of poetical literature. Had we seen this piece before penning our first notice of Hood we should have had much hesitation in speaking of fancy and fantasy as his predominant features. At all events we

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should have given him credit for much more of true imagination than we did. Not the least merit of the work is its rigorous simplicity. There is no narrative and no doggerel philosophy. The whole subject is the description of a deserted house, which the popular superstition considers haunted. The thesis is one of the truest in all poetry. As a mere thesis it is really difficult to conceive anything better. The strength of the poet is put forth in the invention of traits in keeping with the ideas of crime, abandonment, and ghostly visitation. Every legitimate art is brought in to aid in conveying the intended effects; and, what is quite remarkable in the case of Hood, nothing discordant is at any point introduced. He has here very little of what we have designated as the fantastic; little which is not strictly harmonious. The metre and rhythm are not only in themselves admirably adapted to the whole design, but, with a true artistic feeling, the poet has preserved a thorough monotone throughout, and rendered its effect more impressive by the repetition (gradually increasing in frequency towards the *finale*) of one of the most pregnant and effective of the stanzas:

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear,  
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,  
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,  
"The place is haunted."

Had Hood only written *The Haunted House* it would have sufficed to render him immortal.

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### CLXXIX

There is an old German chronicle about Reynard the Fox when crossed in love,—about how he desired to turn hermit, but could find no spot in which he could be “thoroughly alone,” until he came upon the desolate fortress of Malspart. He should have taken to reading the “American Drama” of *Witchcraft*. I fancy he would have found himself “thoroughly alone” in that.

### CLXXX

Since it has become fashionable to trundle houses about the streets, should there not be some remodeling of the legal definition of realty, as “that which is permanent, fixed, and immovable, that cannot be carried out of its place”? According to this, a house is by no means real estate.

### CLXXXI

The enormous multiplication of books in every branch of knowledge is one of the greatest evils of this age; since it presents one of the most serious obstacles to the acquisition of correct information, by throwing in the reader's way piles of lumber, in which he must painfully grope for the scraps of useful matter peradventure interspersed.

### CLXXXII

That Professor Wilson is one of the most gifted and

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altogether one of the most remarkable men of his day, few persons will be weak enough to deny. His ideality, his enthusiastic appreciation of the beautiful, conjoined with a temperament compelling him into action and expression, has been the root of his pre-eminent success. Much of it, undoubtedly, must be referred to that so-called moral courage which is but the consequence of the temperament in its physical elements. In a word, Professor Wilson is what he is, because he possesses ideality, energy, and audacity, each in a very unusual degree. The first, almost unaided by the two latter, has enabled him to produce much impression, as a poet, upon the secondary or tertiary grades of the poetic comprehension. His *Isle of Palms* appeals effectively to all those poetic intellects in which the poetic predominates greatly over the intellectual element. It is a composition which delights through the glow of its imagination, but which repels (comparatively, of course), through the *niaiserie*s of its general conduct and construction. As a critic, Professor Wilson has derived, as might easily be supposed, the greatest aid from the qualities for which we have given him credit, and it is in criticism especially that it becomes very difficult to say which of these qualities has assisted him the most. It is sheer audacity, however, to which, perhaps, after all, he is the most particularly indebted. How little he owes to intellectual pre-eminence, and how much to the mere



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overbearing impetuosity of his opinions, would be a singular subject for speculation. Nevertheless, it is true, that this rash spirit of domination would have served, without his rich ideality, but to hurry him into contempt. Be this as it may, in the first requisite of a critic the Scotch Aristarchus is grossly deficient. Of one who instructs we demand, in the first instance, a certain knowledge of the principles which regulate the instruction. Professor Wilson's capability is limited to a keen appreciation of the beautiful, and fastidious sense of the deformed. Why or how either is either, he never dreams of pretending to inquire, because he sees clearly his own inability to comprehend. He is no analyst. He is ignorant of the machinery of his own thoughts and the thoughts of other men. His criticism is emphatically on the surface—superficial. His opinions are mere *dícta*—unsupported *verba magístri*, and are just or unjust at the variable taste of the individual who reads them. He persuades, he bewilders, he overwhelms, at times he even argues; but there has been no period at which he ever demonstrated anything beyond his own utter incapacity for demonstration.

### CLXXXIII

One of the most singular styles in the world, certainly one of the most loose, is that of the elder D'Israeli. For example, he thus begins his chapter on Bibliomania: "The preceding article [that on Libraries]

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is honorable to literature." Here no self-praise is intended. The writer means to say merely that the facts narrated in the preceding article are honorable, etc. Three fourths of his sentences are constructed in a similar manner. The blunders evidently arise, however, from the author's preoccupation with his subject. His thought, or, rather, matter, outruns his pen, and drives him upon condensation at the expense of luminousness. The manner of D'Israeli has many of the traits of Gibbon, although little of the latter's precision.

### CLXXXIV

Words—printed ones especially—are murderous things. Keats did (or did not) die of a criticism, Cromwell of Titus's pamphlet *Killing no Murder*, and Montfleury perished of the *Andromache*. The author of the *Parnasse Réformé* makes him thus speak in Hades: "L'homme donc qui voudrait savoir ce dont je suis mort qu'il ne demande pas s'il fût de fièvre ou de podagre ou d'autre chose mais qu'il entende que ce fût de l'*Andromache*." As for myself, I am fast dying of the *Sartor Resartus*.

### CLXXXV

Captain Hall is one of the most agreeable of writers. We like him for the same reason that we like a good drawing-room conversationist,—there is such a pleasure in listening to his elegant nothings. Not that the captain is unable to be profound. He has, on the con-

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trary, some reputation for science. But in his hands even the most trifling personal adventures become interesting from the very piquancy with which they are told.

### CLXXXVI

How truthful an air of deep lamentation hangs here <sup>1</sup> upon every gentle syllable! It pervades all. It comes over the sweet melody of the words, over the gentleness and grace which we fancy in the little maiden herself, even over the half-playful, half-petulant air with which she lingers on the beauties and good qualities of her favorite, like the cool shadow of a summer cloud over a bed of lilies and violets and "all sweet flowers." The whole thing is redolent with poetry of the very loftiest order. It is positively crowded with nature and with pathos. Every line is an idea, conveying either the beauty and playfulness of the fawn, or the artlessness of the maiden, or the love of the maiden, or her admiration, or her grief, or the fragrance and sweet warmth and perfect appropriateness of the little nest-like bed of lilies and roses, which the fawn devoured as it lay upon them, and could scarcely be distinguished from them by the once happy little damsel who went to seek her pet with an arch and rosy smile upon her face. Consider the great variety of truth and delicate thought in the few lines we have quoted, the wonder of the maiden at the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Maiden Hunting for her Fawn* by Andrew Marvell.

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fleetness of her favorite, the "little silver feet," the fawn challenging his mistress to the race, "with the pretty skipping grace," running on before, and then, with head turned back, awaiting her approach only to fly from it again,—can we not distinctly perceive all these things? The exceeding vigor, too, and beauty of the line:

And trod as if on the four winds,

which are vividly apparent when we regard the artless nature of the speaker, and the four feet of the favorite, one for each wind. Then the garden of "my own," so overgrown—entangled—with lilies and roses as to be "a little wilderness," the fawn loving to be there and there "only," the maiden seeking it "where it should lie," and not being able to distinguish it from the flowers until "itself would rise," the lying among the lilies "like a bank of lilies," the loving to "fill" itself with roses,

And its pure virgin limbs to fold  
In whitest sheets of lilies cold,

and these things being its "chief" delights, and then the pre-eminent beauty and naturalness of the concluding lines, whose very outrageous hyperbole and absurdity only render them the more true to nature and to propriety, when we consider the innocence, the artlessness, the enthusiasm, the passionate grief, and more passionate admiration of the bereaved child.

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Had it lived long it would have been  
Lilies without, roses within.

### CLXXXVII

We are not among those who regard the genius of Petrarch as a subject for enthusiastic admiration. The characteristics of his poetry are not traits of the highest, or even of a high order; and, in accounting for his fame, the discriminating critic will look rather to the circumstances which surrounded the man than to the literary merits of the pertinacious sonneteer. Grace and tenderness we grant him, but these qualities are surely insufficient to establish his poetical apotheosis.

In other respects he is entitled to high consideration. As a patriot, notwithstanding some accusations which have been rather urged than established, we can only regard him with approval. In his republican principles, in his support of Rienzi at the risk of the displeasure of the Colonna family, in his whole political conduct, in short, he seems to have been nobly and disinterestedly zealous for the welfare of his country. But Petrarch is most important when we look upon him as the bridge by which, over the dark gulf of the Middle Ages, the knowledge of the old world made its passage into the new. His influence on what is termed the Revival of Letters was perhaps greater than that of any man who ever lived; certainly far greater than

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that of any of his immediate contemporaries. His ardent zeal in recovering and transcribing the lost treasures of antique lore cannot be too highly appreciated. But for him, many of our most valued classics might have been numbered with Pindar's hymns and dithyrambics. He devoted days and nights to this labor of love; snatching numerous precious books from the very brink of oblivion. His judgment in these things was strikingly correct, while his erudition, for the age in which he lived, and for the opportunities he enjoyed, has always been a subject of surprise.

### CLXXXVIII

One of the most singular pieces of literary mosaic is Mr. Longfellow's *Midnight Mass for the Dying Year*. The general idea and manner are from Tennyson's *Death of the Old Year*, several of the most prominent points are from the death scene of Cordelia in *Lear*, and the line about the "hooded friars" is from the *Comus* of Milton. Some approach to this patchwork may be found in these lines from Tasso:

Giace l'alta Cartago: à pena i segni  
De l'alte sui ruine il lido serba:  
Muoino le città, muoino i regni;  
Copre i fasti e le pompe arena et herba;  
E l'huom d'esser mortal per che si sdegni.

This is entirely made up from Lucan and Sulpicius. The former says of Troy:



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Iam tota teguntur  
Pergama dumetis: etiam perire ruinæ.

Sulpicius, in a letter to Cicero, says of Megara, Egina, and Corinth: "Hem! nos homunculi indignamur si quis nostrum interiit, quorum vita brevior esse debet, cum uno loco tot oppidorum cadavera projecta jaceant."

### CLXXXIX

The ordinary pickpocket filches a purse, and the matter is at an end. He neither takes honor to himself, openly, on the score of the purloined purse, nor does he subject the individual robbed to the charge of pickpocketism in his own person; by so much the less odious is he, then, than the filcher of literary property. It is impossible, we should think, to imagine a more sickening spectacle than that of the plagiarist, who walks among mankind with an erecter step, and who feels his heart beat with a prouder impulse on account of plaudits which he is conscious are the due of another. It is the purity, the nobility, the ethereality of just fame; it is the contrast between this ethereality and the grossness of the crime of theft which places the sin of plagiarism in so detestable a light. We are horror-stricken to find existing in the same bosom the soul-uplifting thirst for fame and the debasing propensity to pilfer. It is the anomaly, the discord, which so grossly offends.

## Marginalia

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### CXC

Voltaire, in his preface to *Brutus*, actually boasts of having introduced the Roman Senate on the stage in red mantles.

### CXCI

“Les anges,” says Madame Dudevant, a woman who intersperses many an admirable sentiment amid a chaos of the most shameless and altogether objectionable fiction—“Les anges ne sont plus pures que le cœur d’un jeune homme qui aime en vérité” (The angels are not more pure than the heart of a young man who loves with fervor). The hyperbole is scarcely less than true. It would be truth itself, were it averred of the love of him who is at the same time young and a poet. The boyish poet-love is indisputably that one of the human sentiments which most nearly realizes our dreams of the chastened voluptuousness of heaven.

In every allusion made by the author of *Childe Harold* to his passion for Mary Chaworth there runs a vein of almost spiritual tenderness and purity, strongly in contrast with the gross earthliness pervading and disfiguring his ordinary love poems. *The Dream*, in which the incidents of his parting with her when about to travel, are said to be delineated, or at least paralleled, has never been excelled (certainly never excelled by him) in the blended fervor, delicacy, truthfulness, and ethereality which sublimates and adorn it.

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For this reason it may well be doubted if he has written any thing so universally popular. That his attachment for this "Mary" (in whose very name there indeed seemed to exist for him an "enchantment") was earnest and long-abiding, we have every reason to believe. There are a hundred evidences of this fact, scattered not only through his own poems and letters, but in the memoirs of his relatives and cotemporaries in general. But that it was thus earnest and enduring does not controvert, in any degree, the opinion that it was a passion (if passion it can properly be termed) of the most thoroughly romantic, shadowy, and imaginative character. It was born of the hour and of the youthful necessity to love, while it was nurtured by the waters and the hills, and the flowers, and the stars. It had no peculiar regard to the person, or to the character, or to the reciprocating affection of Mary Chaworth. Any maiden, not immediately and positively repulsive, he would have loved under the same circumstances of hourly and unrestricted communion, such as the engravings of the subject shadow forth. They met without restraint and without reserve. As mere children they sported together; in boyhood and girlhood they read from the same books, sang the same songs, or roamed hand-in-hand through the grounds of the conjoining estates. The result was not merely natural or merely probable, it was as inevitable as destiny itself.

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In view of a passion thus engendered, Miss Chaworth (who is represented as possessed of no little personal beauty and some accomplishments) could not have failed to serve sufficiently well as the incarnation of the ideal that haunted the fancy of the poet. It is perhaps better, nevertheless, for the mere romance of the love passages between the two, that their intercourse was broken up in early life and never uninterruptedly resumed in after years. Whatever of warmth, whatever of soul-passion, whatever of the truer nare and essentiality of romance was elicited during the youthful association, is to be attributed altogether to the poet. If she felt at all, it was only while the magnetism of his actual presence compelled her to feel. If she responded at all, it was merely because the necromancy of his words of fire could not do otherwise than extort a response. In absence, the bard bore easily with him all the fancies which were the basis of his flame,—a flame which absence itself but served to keep in vigor, while the less ideal but at the same time the less really substantial affection of his lady-love perished utterly and forthwith, through simple lack of the element which had fanned it into being. He to her, in brief, was a not unhandsome, and not ignoble, but somewhat portionless, somewhat eccentric, and rather lame young man. She to him was the Egeria of his dreams, the Venus Aphrodite that sprang, in full and supernal loveliness, from the

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bright foam upon the storm-tormented ocean of his thoughts.

### CXCII

Mill says that he has "demonstrated" his propositions. Just in the same way Anaxagoras demonstrated snow to be black (which, perhaps, it is, if we could see the thing in the proper light); and just in the same way the French advocate, Linguet, with Hippocrates in his hand, demonstrated bread to be a slow poison. The worst of the matter is, that propositions such as these seldom stay demonstrated long enough to be thoroughly understood.

### CXCIII

We have read Mr. Paulding's *Life of Washington* with a degree of interest seldom excited in us by the perusal of any book whatever. We are convinced by a deliberate examination of the design, manner, and rich material of the work, that, as it grows in age, it will grow in the estimation of our countrymen, and, finally, will not fail to take a deeper hold upon the public mind, and upon the public affections than any work upon the same subject, or of a similar nature, which has been yet written, or, possibly, which may be written hereafter. Indeed, we cannot perceive the necessity of anything further upon the great theme of Washington. Mr. Paulding has completely and most beautifully filled the vacuum which the works of Marshall

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and Sparks have left open. He has painted the boy, the man, the husband, and the Christian. He has introduced us to the private affections, aspirations, and charities of that hero whose affections of all affections were the most serene, whose aspirations the most God-like, and whose charities the most gentle and pure. He has taken us abroad with the patriot-farmer in his rambles about his homestead. He has seated us in his study and shown us the warrior-Christian in unobtrusive communion with his God. He has done all this, too, and more, in a simple and quiet manner, in a manner peculiarly his own, and which, mainly because it is his own, cannot fail to be exceedingly effective. Yet it is very possible that the public may, for many years to come, overlook the rare merits of a work whose want of arrogant assumption is so little in keeping with the usages of the day, and whose striking simplicity and *naïveté* of manner give, to a cursory examination, so little evidence of the labor of composition. We have no fears, however, for the future. Such books as these before us go down to posterity like rich wines, with a certainty of being more valued as they go. They force themselves with the gradual but rapidly accumulating power of strong wedges into the hearts and understandings of a community.

In regard to the style of Mr. Paulding's *Washington*, it would scarcely be doing it justice to speak of it



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merely as well adapted to its subject and to its immediate design. Perhaps a rigorous examination would detect an occasional want of euphony and some inaccuracies of syntactical arrangement. But nothing could be more out of place than any such examination in respect to a book whose forcible, rich, vivid, and comprehensive English might advantageously be held up as a model for the young writers of the land. There is no better literary manner than the manner of Mr. Paulding. Certainly no American, and possibly no living writer of England, has more of those numerous peculiarities which go to the formation of a happy style. It is questionable, we think, whether any writer of any country combines as many of these peculiarities with as much of that essential negative virtue, the absence of affectation. We repeat, as our confident opinion, that it would be difficult, even with great care and labor, to improve upon the general manner of the volumes now before us, and that they contain many long individual passages of a force and beauty not to be surpassed by the finest passages of the finest writers in any time or country. It is this striking character in the *Washington* of Mr. Paulding,—striking and peculiar indeed at a season when we are so culpably inattentive to all matters of this nature, as to mistake for style the fine airs at second hand of the silliest romancers,—it is this character, we say, which should insure the fulfilment of the writer's principal

## Marginalia

design in the immediate introduction of his book into every respectable academy in the land.

### CXCIV

Scott, in his *Presbyterian Eloquence*, speaks of "that ancient fable, not much known," in which a trial of skill in singing being agreed upon between the cuckoo and the nightingale, the ass was chosen umpire. When each bird had done his best, the umpire declared that the nightingale sang extremely well, but that "for a good plain song give him the cuckoo." The judge with the long ears, in this case, is a fine type of the tribe of critics who insist upon what they call "quietude" as the supreme literary excellence—gentlemen who rail at Tennyson and elevate Addison into apotheosis. By the way, the following passage from Sterne's *Letter from France* should be adopted at once as a motto by the *Down-East Review*: "As we rode along the valley, we saw a herd of asses on the top of one of the mountains. How they viewed and reviewed us!"

### CXCV

A hundred criticisms to the contrary notwithstanding, I must regard *The Lady of Lyons* as one of the most successful dramatic efforts of modern times. It is popular, and justly so. It could not fail to be popular so long as the people have a heart. It abounds in sentiments which stir the soul as the sound of a

## Marginalia

trumpet. It proceeds rapidly and consequentially, the interest not for one moment being permitted to flag. Its incidents are admirably conceived and skilfully wrought into execution. Its *dramatis personæ*, throughout, have the high merit of being natural, although, except in the case of Pauline, there is no marked individuality. She is a creation which would have done no dishonor to Shakespeare. She excites profound emotion. It has been sillily objected to her that she is weak, mercenary, and at points ignoble. She is; and what then? We are not dealing with Clarissa Harlowe. Bulwer has painted a woman. The chief defect of the play lies in the heroine's consenting to wed Beauseant, while aware of the existence and even the continued love of Claude. As the plot runs, there is a question in Pauline's soul between a comparatively trivial (because merely worldly) injury to her father, and utter ruin and despair inflicted upon her husband. Here there should not have been an instant's hesitation. The audience have no sympathy with any. Nothing on earth should have induced the wife to give up the living Melnotte. Only the assurance of his death could have justified her in sacrificing herself to Beauseant. As it is, we hate her for the sacrifice. The effect is repulsive, but I must be understood as calling this effect objectionable solely on the ground of its being at war with the whole genius of the play.

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### CXCVI

"Contempt," says an Eastern proverb, "pierces even through the shell of the tortoise"; but the skull of a Fuller would feel itself insulted by a comparison in point of impermeability with the shell of a Galapago turtle.

### CXCVII

How thoroughly comprehensive is the account of Adam, as given at the bottom of the old picture in the Vatican!—"Adam, divinitus edoctus, primus scientiarum et literarum inventor."

### CXCVIII

If need were, I should have little difficulty, perhaps, in defending a certain apparent dogmatism to which I am prone on the topic of versification.

"What is poetry?" notwithstanding Leigh Hunt's rigmarolic attempt at answering it, is a query that, with great care and deliberate agreement beforehand on the exact value of certain leading words, may, possibly, be settled to the partial satisfaction of a few analytical intellects, but which, in the existing condition of metaphysics, never can be settled to the satisfaction of the majority; for the question is purely metaphysical, and the whole science of metaphysics is at present a chaos, through the impossibility of fixing the meanings of the words which its very nature compels it to employ. But as regards versification this

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difficulty is only partial; for although one third of the topic may be considered metaphysical, and thus may be mooted at the fancy of this individual or of that, still the remaining two thirds belong undeniably to the mathematics. The questions ordinarily discussed with so much gravity in regard to rhythm, metre, etc., are susceptible of positive adjustment by demonstration. Their laws are merely a portion of the Median laws of form and quantity—of relation. In respect, then, to any of these ordinary questions, these sillily moot points which so often arise in common criticism, the prosodist would speak as weakly in saying “this or that proposition is probably so and so, or possibly so and so,” as would the mathematician in admitting that, in his humble opinion, or if he were not greatly mistaken, any two sides of a triangle were, together, greater than the third side. I must add, however, as some palliation of the discussions referred to, and of the objections so often urged with a sneer to “particular theories of versification binding no one but their inventor,” that there is really extant no such work as a *Prosody Raisonnée*. The prosodies of the schools are merely collections of vague laws, with their more vague exceptions, based upon no principles whatever, but extorted in the most speculative manner from the usages of the ancients, who had no laws beyond those of their ears and fingers. “And these were sufficient,” it will be said, “since the *Iliad* is melodious

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and harmonious beyond anything of modern times." Admit this; but neither do we write in Greek, nor has the invention of modern times been as yet exhausted. An analysis based on the natural laws of which the bard of Scio was ignorant, would suggest multitudinous improvements to the best passages of even the *Iliad*; nor does it in any manner follow from the supposititious fact that Homer found in his ears and fingers a satisfactory system of rules (the point which I have just denied), nor does it follow, I say, from this, that the rules which we deduce from the Homeric effects are to supersede those immutable principles of time, quantity, etc.,—the mathematics, in short, of music,—which must have stood to these Homeric effects in the relation of causes, the mediate causes of which these "ears and fingers" are simply the *intermedia*.

### CXCIX

Of Berryer somebody says, "He is the man in whose description is the greatest possible consumption of antithesis." For "description" read "lectures," and the sentence would apply well to Hudson, the lecturer on Shakespeare. Antithesis is his end: he has no other. He does not employ it to enforce thought, but he gathers thought from all quarters with the sole view to its capacity for antithetical expression. His essays have thus only paragraphical effect; as wholes, they produce not the slightest impression. No man



## Marginalia

living could say what it is Mr. Hudson proposes to demonstrate; and if the question were propounded to Mr. H. himself, we can fancy how particularly embarrassed he would be for a reply. In the end, were he to answer honestly he would say—"antithesis."

As for his reading, Julius Cæsar would have said of him that he sang ill, and undoubtedly he must have "gone to the dogs" for his experience in pronouncing the "r" as if his throat were bored like a rifle-barrel.<sup>1</sup>

### CC

It is James Montgomery who thinks proper to style McPherson's *Ossian* a collection of "halting, dancing, lumbering, grating, nondescript paragraphs."

### CCI

A book <sup>2</sup> which puzzles me beyond measure, since, while agreeing with its general conclusions (except where it discusses prevision), I invariably find fault with the reasoning through which the conclusions are attained. I think the treatise grossly illogical throughout. For example, the origin of the work is thus stated in an introductory chapter:

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<sup>1</sup> "Nec illi (Demostheni) turpe videbatur vel, optimis relictis magistris, ad canes se conferre, et ab illis literæ vim et naturam petere, illorumque in sonando quod satis est morem imitari."—*Ad Meker de vet, Prom, Ling, Græcæ.*

<sup>2</sup> *Human Magnetism; Its Claim to Dispassionate Inquiry, Being an Attempt to Show the Utility of its Application for the Relief of Human Suffering.* By W. Newnham, M. R. S. L., author of the *Reciprocal Influence of Body and Mind.* Wiley & Putnam.

## Marginalia

"About twelve months since, I was asked by some friends to write a paper against mesmerism, and I was furnished with materials by a highly esteemed quondam pupil, which proved incontestably that under some circumstances the operator might be duped, that hundreds of enlightened persons might equally be deceived, and certainly went far to show that the pretended science was wholly a delusion, a system of fraud and jugglery by which the imaginations of the credulous were held in thralldom through the arts of the designing. Perhaps in an evil hour I assented to the proposition thus made; but on reflection I found that the facts before me only led to the direct proof that certain phenomena might be counterfeited; and the existence of counterfeit coin is rather a proof that there is somewhere the genuine standard gold to be imitated."

The fallacy here lies in a mere variation of what is called "begging the question." Counterfeit coin is said to prove the existence of genuine; this, of course, is no more than the truism that there can be no counterfeit where there is no genuine, just as there can be no badness where there is no goodness, the terms being purely relative. But because there can be no counterfeit where there is no original, does it in any manner follow that any undemonstrated original exists? In seeing a spurious coin we know it to be such by com-

## Marginalia

parison with coins admitted to be genuine; but, were no coin admitted to be genuine, how should we establish the counterfeit, and what right should we have to talk of counterfeits at all? Now, in the case of mesmerism, our author is merely begging the admission. In saying that the existence of counterfeit proves the existence of real mesmerism, he demands that the real be admitted. Either he demands this or there is no shadow of force in his proposition, for it is clear that we can pretend to be that which is not. A man, for instance, may feign himself a sphinx or a griffin, but it would never do to regard as thus demonstrated the actual existence of either griffins or sphinxes. A word alone—the word “counterfeit”—has been sufficient to lead Mr. Newnham astray. People cannot be properly said to “counterfeit” prevision, etc., but to feign these phenomena. Dr. Newnham’s argument, of course, is by no means original with him, although he seems to pride himself on it as if it were. Dr. More says: “That there should be so universal a fame and fear of that which never was, nor is, nor can be ever in the world, is to me the greatest miracle of all. If there had not been, at some time or other, true miracles, it had not been so easy to impose on the people by false. The alchemist would never go about to sophisticate metals, to pass them off for true gold and silver, unless that such a thing was acknowledged as true gold and silver in the world.” This is precisely

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the same idea as that of Dr. Newnham, and belongs to that extensive class of argumentation which is all point—deriving its whole effect from epigrammatism. That the belief in ghosts, or in a Deity, or in a future state, or in anything else credible or incredible,—that any such belief is universal, demonstrates nothing more than that which needs no demonstration, the human unanimity, the identity of construction in the human brain,—an identity of which the inevitable result must be, upon the whole, similar deductions from similar data. Most especially do I disagree with the author of this book in his (implied) disparagement of the work of Chauncey Hare Townshend—a work to be valued properly only in a day to come.

### CCII

The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in its flight.<sup>1</sup>

The single feather here is imperfectly illustrative of the omniprevalent darkness; but a more especial objection is the likening of one feather to the falling of another. Night is personified as a bird, and darkness, the feather of this bird, falls from it, how?—as another feather falls from another bird. Why, it does this of course. The illustration is identical, that is to

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<sup>1</sup> Proem to Longfellow's *Waif*.

## Marginalia

say, null. It has no more force than an identical proposition in logic.

### CCIII

The question of international copyright has been overloaded with words. The right of property in a literary work is disputed merely for the sake of disputation, and no man should be at the trouble of arguing the point. Those who deny it have made up their minds to deny everything tending to further the law in contemplation. Nor is the question of expediency in any respect relevant. Expediency is only to be discussed where no rights interfere. It would, no doubt, be very expedient in any poor man to pick the pocket of his wealthy neighbor (as the poor are the majority, the case is precisely parallel to the copyright case); but what would the rich think if expediency were permitted to overrule their right? But even the expediency is untenable, grossly so. The immediate advantage arising to the pockets of our people, in the existing condition of things, is no doubt sufficiently plain. We get more reading for less money than if the international law existed; but the remoter disadvantages are of infinitely greater weight. In brief, they are these: First, we have injury to our national literature by repressing the efforts of our men of genius; for genius, as a general rule, is poor in worldly goods and cannot write for nothing. Our genius being thus repressed, we are



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written at only by our "gentlemen of elegant leisure," and mere gentlemen of elegant leisure have been noted, time out of mind, for the insipidity of their productions. In general, too, they are obstinately conservative, and this feeling leads them into imitation of foreign, more especially of British, models. This is one main source of the imitativeness with which, as a people, we have been justly charged, although the first cause is to be found in our position as a colony. Colonies have always naturally aped the mother land. In the second place, irreparable ill is wrought by the almost exclusive dissemination among us of foreign, that is to say, of monarchical or aristocratical, sentiment in foreign books; nor is this sentiment less fatal to democracy because it reaches the people themselves directly in the gilded pill of the poem or the novel. We have next to consider the impolicy of our committing, in the national character, an open and continuous wrong on the frivolous pretext of its benefiting ourselves. The last and by far the most important consideration of all, however, is that sense of insult and injury aroused in the whole active intellect of the world, the bitter and fatal resentment excited in the universal heart of literature, a resentment which will not and which cannot make nice distinctions between the temporary perpetrators of the wrong and that democracy in general which permits its perpetration. The authorial body is the most autocratic on the face of



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the earth. How, then, can those institutions even hope to be safe which systematically persist in tramping it under foot?

### CCIV

The drama, as the chief of the imitative arts, has a tendency to beget and keep alive in its votaries the imitative propensity. This might be supposed *a priori*, and experience confirms the supposition. Of all imitators, dramatists are the most perverse, the most unconscionable, or the most unconscious, and have been so time out of mind. Euripides and Sophocles were merely echoes of Æschylus, and not only was Terence Menander and nothing beyond, but of the sole Roman tragedies extant (the ten attributed to Seneca), nine are on Greek subjects. Here, then, is cause enough for the "decline of the drama," if we are to believe that the drama has declined. But it has not; on the contrary, during the last fifty years it has materially advanced. All other arts, however, have, in the same interval, advanced at a far greater rate, each very nearly in the direct ratio of its non-imitativeness,—painting, for example, least of all,—and the effect on the drama is, of course, that of apparent retrogradation.

### CCV

The Swedenborgians inform me that they have discovered all that I said in a magazine article, entitled *Mesmeric Revelation*, to be absolutely true, although

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at first they were very strongly inclined to doubt my veracity, a thing which, in that particular instance, I never dreamed of not doubting myself. The story is a pure fiction from beginning to end.

### CCVI

Here is a book of "amusing travels," which is full enough of statistics to have been the joint composition of Messieurs Busching, Hassel, Cannabitch, Gaspari, Gutschmuth, and company.

### CCVII

I have never yet seen an English heroic verse on the proper model of the Greek, although there have been innumerable attempts, among which those of Coleridge are, perhaps, the most absurd, next to those of Sir Philip Sidney and Longfellow. The author of *The Vision of Rubeta* has done better, and Percival better yet; but no one has seemed to suspect that the natural preponderance of spondaic words in the Latin and Greek must, in the English, be supplied by art, that is to say, by a careful culling of the few spondaic words which the language affords, as, for example, here:

Man is a | complex, | compound, | compost, | yet is he | God-born.

This, to all intents, is a Greek hexameter, but then its spondees are spondees, and not mere trochees. The

## Marginalia

verses of Coleridge and others are dissonant for the simple reason that there is no equality in time between a trochee and a dactyl. When Sir Philip Sidney writes,

So to the | woods Love | runnes as | well as | rides to the |  
palace,

he makes an heroic verse only to the eye; for "woods Love" is the only true spondee, "runnes as," "well as," and "palace," have each the first syllable long and the second short; that is to say, they are all trochees and occupy less time than the dactyls or spondee—hence the halting. Now, all this seems to be the simplest thing in the world, and the only wonder is how men professing to be scholars should attempt to engraft a verse, of which the spondee is an element, upon a stock which repels the spondee as antagonistical.

### CCVIII

In the sweet *Lily of Nithsdale* we read,

She 's gane to dwell in heaven, my lassie;

She 's gane to dwell in heaven:

Ye 're owre pure, quo' the voice of God,

For dwelling out o' heaven.

The "owre" and the "o'" of the two last verses should be Anglicized. The Deity at least should be supposed to speak so as to be understood, although I am

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aware that a folio has been written to demonstrate broad Scotch as the language of Adam and Eve in Paradise.

### CCIX

The conclusion of the Proem in Mr. Longfellow's late *Waif* is exceedingly beautiful. The whole poem is remarkable in this, that one of its principal excellences arises from what is, generically, a demerit. No error, for example, is more certainly fatal in poetry than defective rhythm; but here the slipshodness is so thoroughly in unison with the nonchalant air of the thoughts, which, again, are so capitally applicable to the thing done (a mere introduction of other people's fancies), that the effect of the looseness of rhythm becomes palpable, and we see at once that here is a case in which to be correct would be inartistic. Here are three of the quatrains:

I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes over me  
That my soul cannot resist—

A feeling of sadness and longing  
That is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mists resemble the rain.

And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.

## Marginalia

Now these lines are not to be scanned. They are referable to no true principles of rhythm. The general idea is that of a succession of anapæsts; yet not only is this idea confounded with that of dactyls, but this succession is improperly interrupted at all points—improperly, because by unequivalent feet. The partial prosaicism thus brought about, however (without any interference with the mere melody), becomes a beauty solely through the nicety of its adaptation to the tone of the poem, and of this tone, again, to the matter in hand. In his keen sense of this adaptation (which conveys the notion of what is vaguely termed “ease”), the reader so far loses sight of the rhythmic imperfection that he can be convinced of its existence only by treating in the same rhythm (or, rather, lack of rhythm), a subject of different tone—a subject in which decision shall take the place of nonchalance. Now, undoubtedly, I intend all this as complimentary to Mr. Longfellow; but it was for the utterance of these very opinions in the *New York Mirror* that I was accused, by some of the poet’s friends, of inditing what they think proper to call “strictures” on the author of *Outre-Mer*.

CCX

We might contrive a very poetical and very suggestive, although, perhaps, no very tenable philosophy, by supposing that the virtuous live while the wicked suffer annihilation hereafter; and that the danger of the

## Marginalia

annihilation (which danger would be in the ratio of the sin) might be indicated nightly by slumber, and occasionally, with more distinctness, by a swoon. In proportion to the dreamlessness of the sleep, for example, would be the degree of the soul's liability to annihilation. In the same way, to swoon and awake in utter unconsciousness of any lapse of time during the syncope, would demonstrate the soul to have been then in such condition that, had death occurred, annihilation would have followed. On the other hand, when the revival is attended with remembrance of visions (as is now and then the case, in fact), then the soul is to be considered in such condition as would insure its existence after the bodily death, the bliss or wretchedness of the existence to be indicated by the character of the visions.

### CCXI

When we attend less to "authority" and more to principles, when we look less at merit and more at demerit (instead of the converse, as some persons suggest), we shall then be better critics than we are. We must neglect our models and study our capabilities. The mad eulogies on what occasionally has, in letters, been well done, spring from our imperfect comprehension of what it is possible for us to do better. "A man who has never seen the sun," says Calderon, "cannot be blamed for thinking that no glory can



## Marginalia

exceed that of the moon; a man who has seen neither moon nor sun, cannot be blamed for expatiating on the incomparable effulgence of the morning star." Now, it is the business of the critic so to soar that he shall see the sun, even although its orb be far below the ordinary horizon.

### CCXII

The United States motto, *E pluribus unum*, may possibly have a sly allusion to Pythagoras' definition of beauty—the reduction of many into one.

### CCXIII

The great feature of the *Old Curiosity Shop* is its chaste, vigorous, and glorious imagination. This is the one charm, all potent, which alone would suffice to compensate for a world more of error than Mr. Dickens ever committed. It is not only seen in the conception and general handling of the story, or in the invention of character, but it pervades every sentence of the book. We recognize its prodigious influence in every inspired word. It is this which induces the reader who is at all ideal to pause frequently, to re-read the occasionally quaint phrases, to muse in uncontrollable delight over thoughts which, while he wonders he has never hit upon them before, he yet admits that he never has encountered. In fact, it is the wand of the enchanter.

Had we room to particularize, we would mention as

## Marginalia

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points evincing most distinctly the ideality of the *Old Curiosity Shop* the picture of the shop itself, the newly born desire of the worldly old man for the peace of green fields, his whole character and conduct, in short; the schoolmaster, with his desolate fortunes, seeking affection in little children; the haunts of Quilp among the wharf-rats; the tinkering of the Punch-men among the tombs; the glorious scene where the man of the forge sits poring, at deep midnight, into that dread fire—again the whole conception of this character; and, last and greatest, the stealthy approach of Nell to her death—her gradual sinking away on the journey to the village, so skilfully indicated rather than described; her pensive and prescient meditation; the fit of strange musing which came over her when the house in which she was to die first broke upon her sight; the description of this house, of the old church, and of the churchyard—everything in rigid consonance with the one impression to be conveyed; that deep, meaningless well, the comments of the sexton upon death and upon his own secure life,—this whole world of mournful yet peaceful idea merging at length into the decease of the child Nelly, and the uncomprehending despair of the grandfather. These concluding scenes are so drawn that human language, urged by human thought, could go no farther in the excitement of human feelings. And the pathos is of that best order which is relieved, in great measure, by ideality. Here the book has

## Marginalia

never been equalled, never approached, except in one instance, and that is in the case of the *Undine* of De La Motte Fouqué. The imagination is perhaps as great in this latter work, but the pathos, although truly beautiful and deep, fails of much of its effect through the material from which it is wrought. The chief character, being endowed with purely fanciful attributes, cannot command our full sympathies as can a simple denizen of earth. In saying, a page or so above, that the death of the child left too painful an impression, and should therefore have been avoided, we must, of course, be understood as referring to the work as a whole, and in respect to its general appreciation and popularity. The death, as recorded, is, we repeat, of the highest order of literary excellence; yet while none can deny this fact, there are few who will be willing to read the concluding passages a second time.

Upon the whole we think the *Old Curiosity Shop* very much the best of the works of Mr. Dickens. It is scarcely possible to speak of it too well. It is in all respects a tale which will secure for its author the enthusiastic admiration of every man of genius.

### CCXIV

It is not every one who can put "a good thing" properly together, although, perhaps, when thus properly put together, every tenth person you meet with

## Marginalia

may be capable of both conceiving and appreciating it. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that less actual ability is required in the composition of a really good "brief article," than in a fashionable novel of the usual dimensions. The novel certainly requires what is denominated a sustained effort; but this is a matter of mere perseverance and has but a collateral relation to talent. On the other hand—unity of effect, a quality not easily appreciated or indeed comprehended by an ordinary mind, and a desideratum difficult of attainment, even by those who can conceive it, is indispensable in the "brief article," and not so in the common novel. The latter, if admired at all, is admired for its detached passages without reference to the work as a whole, or without reference to any general design, which, if it even exist in some measure, will be found to have occupied but little of the writer's attention, and cannot, from the length of the narrative, be taken in at one view by the reader.

### CCXV

I am not sure that Tennyson is not the greatest of poets. The uncertainty attending the public conception of the term "poet" alone prevents me from demonstrating that he is. Other bards produce effects which are, now and then, otherwise produced than by what we call poems; but Tennyson an effect which only a poem does. His alone are idiosyncratic poems.

## Marginalia

By the enjoyment or non-enjoyment of the *Morte d'Arthur*, or of the *Oenone*, I would test any one's ideal sense. There are passages in his works which rivet a conviction I had long entertained, that the indefinite is an element in the true *ποίησις*. Why do some persons fatigue themselves in attempts to unravel such fantasy-pieces as *The Lady of Shalott*? As well unweave the *ventum textilem*. If the author did not deliberately propose to himself a suggestive indefiniteness of meaning, with the view of bringing about a definitiveness of vague and therefore of spiritual effect, this, at least, arose from the silent analytical promptings of that poetic genius which, in its supreme development, embodies all orders of intellectual capacity. I know that indefinitiveness is an element of the true music—I mean the true musical expression. Give to it any undue decision, imbue it with any determinate tone, and you deprive it at once of its ethereal, its ideal, its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its luxury of dream. You dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic upon which it floats. You exhaust it of its breath of fäery. It now becomes a tangible and easily appreciable idea, a thing of the earth, earthly. It has not, indeed, lost its power to please, but all which I consider the distinctiveness of that power. And to the uncultivated talent, or to the unimaginative apprehension, this deprivation of its most delicate nare will be, not unfrequently, a recommendation. A determinateness



## Marginalia

of expression is sought,—and often by composers who should know better,—is sought as a beauty rather than rejected as a blemish. Thus we have, even from high authorities, attempts at absolute imitation in music. Who can forget the silliness of the *Battle of Prague*? What man of taste but must laugh at the interminable drums, trumpets, blunderbusses, and thunder? “Vocal music,” says L’Abbate Gravina, who would have said the same thing of instrumental, “ought to imitate the natural language of the human feelings and passions, rather than the warblings of canary birds, which our singers nowadays affect so vastly to mimic with their quaverings and boasted cadences.” This is true only so far as the “rather” is concerned. If any music must imitate anything, it were assuredly better to limit the imitation as Gravina suggests. Tennyson’s shorter pieces abound in minute rhythmical lapses sufficient to assure me that, in common with all poets living or dead, he has neglected to make precise investigation of the principles of metre; but, on the other hand, so perfect is his rhythmical instinct in general, that, like the present Viscount Canterbury, he seems to see with his ear.

### CCXVI

There are some facts in the physical world which have a really wonderful analogy with others in the world of thought, and seem thus to give some color of



## Marginalia

truth to the (false) rhetorical dogma that metaphor or simile may be made to strengthen an argument as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiae*, for example, with the amount of momentum proportionate with it and consequent upon it, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent impetus is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more extensive in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and are more embarrassed and more full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress.

### CCXVII

Thomas Moore is the most skilful literary artist of his day,—perhaps of any day,—a man who stands in the singular and really wonderful predicament of being undervalued on account of the profusion with which he has scattered about him his good things. The brilliancy on any one page of *Lalla Rookh* would have sufficed to establish that very reputation which has been in a great measure self-dimmed by the galaxied lustre of the entire book. It seems that the horrid laws of political economy cannot be evaded even by the inspired, and that a perfect versification, a vigorous

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style, and a never-tiring fancy may, like the water we drink, and die without, yet despise, be so plentifully set forth as to be absolutely of no value at all.

### CCXVIII

This is a queer little book,<sup>1</sup> which its author regards as “not only necessary, but urgently called for,” because not only “the mass of the people are ignorant of English grammar, but because those who profess great knowledge of it, and even those who make the teaching of it their business, will be found upon examination to be very far from understanding its principles.”

Whether Mr. P. proceeds upon the safe old plan of *Probo meliora, deteriora sequor*,—whether he is one of “the mass” and means to include himself among the ignoramuses,—or whether he is only a desperate quiz, we shall not take it upon ourselves to say; but the fact is clear that, in a Preface of less than two small duodecimo pages (the leading object of which seems to be an eulogy upon one William Cobbett), he has given some half-dozen distinct instances of bad grammar.

“For these purposes,” says he, that is to say, the purposes of instructing mankind and enlightening “every American youth,” without exception,—“for these purposes I have written my lessons in a series of

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<sup>1</sup> *A Grammar of the English Language. In a Series of Letters, Addressed to every American Youth.* By Hugh A. Pue. Philadelphia: Published by the Author.



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This is a queer little book, which its author regards as "not only necessary, but urgently called for," because not only "the mass of the people are ignorant of English grammar, but because those who profess great knowledge of it, and even those who make the teaching of it their business, will be found upon examination to be very far from understanding its principles."

Thomas Moore

Whether Mr. P. proceeds upon the safe old plan of *Proba nullius, deteriora sequor*,—whether he is one of "the mass" and means to include himself among the ignoramuses,—or whether he is only a desperate quiz, we shall not take it upon ourselves to say; but the fact is clear that, in a Preface of less than two small duodecimo pages (the leading object of which seems to be an eulogy upon one William Cobbett), he has given some half-dozen distinct instances of bad grammar.

"For these purposes," says he, that is to say, the purposes of instructing mankind and enlightening every American youth," without exception,—“for these purposes I have written my lessons in a series of

*Lessons in the English Language, in a Series of Letters, Addressed to every American Youth, by A. P. A. Pue. Philadelphia: Published by the Author*







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letters. A mode that affords more opportunity for plainness, familiarity, instruction, and entertainment than any other. A mode that was adopted by Chesterfield in his celebrated instructions on politeness. A mode that was adopted by Smollett in many of his novels, which, even at this day, hold a distinguished place in the world of fiction. A mode that was adopted by William Cobbett, not only in his admirable treatise on English Grammar, but in nearly every work that he wrote." "To Mr. Cobbett," adds the instructor of "every American youth,"—"to Mr. Cobbett I acknowledge myself indebted for the greater part of the grammatical knowledge which I possess." Of the fact stated there can be no question. Nobody but Cobbett could have been the grammatical Mentor of Mr. Pue, whose book (which is all Cobbett) speaks plainly upon the point—nothing but the ghost of William Cobbett, looking over the shoulder of Hugh A. Pue could have inspired the latter gentleman with the bright idea of stringing together four consecutive sentences, in each of which the leading nominative noun is destitute of a verb.

Mr. Pue may attempt to justify his phraseology here by saying that the several sentences, quoted above, commencing with the words, "A mode," are merely continuations of the one beginning "For these purposes"; but this is no justification at all. By the use of the period he has rendered each sentence distinct,

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and each must be examined as such in respect to its grammar. We are only taking the liberty of condemning Mr. P. by the words of his own mouth. Turning to page 72, where he treats of punctuation, we read as follows: "The full point is used at the end of every complete sentence; and a complete sentence is a collection of words making a complete sense without being dependent upon another collection of words to convey the full meaning intended." Now, what kind of a meaning can we give to such a sentence as "A mode that was adopted by Chesterfield in his celebrated instructions on politeness," if we are to have "no dependence upon" the sentences that precede it? But even in the supposition that these five sentences had been run into one, as they should have been, they would still be ungrammatical. For example: "For these purposes I have written my lessons in a series of letters—a mode that affords more opportunity for plainness, familiarity, instruction, and entertainment than any other—a mode," etc. This would have been the proper method of punctuation. "A mode" is placed in apposition with "a series of letters." But it is evident that it is not the "series of letters" which is the "mode." It is the writing the lessons in a series which is so. Yet, in order that the noun "mode" can be properly placed in apposition with what precedes it, this latter must be either a noun or a sentence which, taken collectively, can serve as one.

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Thus, in any shape, all that we have quoted is bad grammar.

We say "bad grammar," and say it through sheer obstinacy, because Mr. Pue says we should not. "Why, what is grammar?" asks he, indignantly. "Nearly all grammarians tell us that grammar is the writing and speaking of the English language correctly. What, then, is bad grammar? Why, bad grammar must be the bad writing and speaking of the English language correctly!!" We give the two admiration notes and all.

In the first place, if grammar be only the writing and speaking the English language correctly, then the French, or the Dutch, or the Kickapoos are miserable, ungrammatical races of people, and have no hopes of being anything else, unless Mr. Pue proceeds to their assistance; but let us say nothing of this for the present. What we wish to assert is, that the usual definition of grammar, as "the writing and speaking correctly," is an error which should have been long ago exploded. Grammar is the analysis of language, and this analysis will be good or bad, just as the capacity employed upon it be weak or strong—just as the grammarian be a Horne Tooke or a Hugh A. Pue. But perhaps, after all, we are treating this gentleman discourteously. His book may be merely intended as a good joke. By the by, he says, in his Preface, that "while he informs the student, he shall take particular

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care to entertain him." Now, the truth is, we have been exceedingly entertained. In such passages as the following, however, which we find upon the second page of the Introduction, we are really at a loss to determine whether it is the *utile* or the *dulce* which prevails. We give the italics of Mr. Pue; without which, indeed, the singular force and beauty of the paragraph cannot be duly appreciated:

"The *proper* study of English grammar, so far from being *dry*, is one of the most rational enjoyments known to us; one that is highly calculated to rouse the dormant energies of the student; it requiring continual mental effort; unceasing exercise of mind. It is, in fact, the *spreading of a thought-producing plaster of Paris upon the extensive grounds of intellect!* It is the parent of idea and great causation of reflection; the mighty *instigator of insurrection in the interior*; and, above all, the unflinching *champion of internal improvement!*" We know nothing about plaster of Paris; but the analogy which subsists between ipecac and grammar—at least, between ipecac and the grammar of Mr. Pue—never, certainly, struck us in so clear a point of view as it does now.

But, after all, whether Mr. P.'s queer little book shall or shall not meet the views of "every American youth" will depend pretty much upon another question of high moment—whether "every American youth" be or be not as great a nincompoop as Mr. Pue.

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### CCXIX

That Lord Brougham was an extraordinary man no one in his senses will deny. An intellect of unusual capacity, goaded into diseased action by passions nearly ferocious, enabled him to astonish the world, and especially the "hero-worshippers," as the author of *Sartor Resartus* has it, by the combined extent and variety of his mental triumphs. Attempting many things, it may at least be said that he egregiously failed in none. But that he pre-eminently excelled in any cannot be affirmed with truth, and might well be denied *a priori*. We have no faith in Admirable Crichtons, and this merely because we have implicit faith in nature and her laws. "He that is born to be a man," says Wieland, in his *Peregrinus Proteus*, "neither should nor can be anything nobler, greater, nor better than a man." The Broughams of the human intellect are never its Newtons or its Bayles. Yet the contemporaneous reputation acquired by the former is naturally greater than any which the latter may attain. The versatility of one whom we see and hear is a more dazzling and more readily appreciable merit than his profundity, which latter is best estimated in the silence of the closet and after the quiet lapse of years. What impression Lord Brougham has stamped upon his age cannot be accurately determined until time has fixed and rendered definite the lines of the medal; and fifty years hence it will be difficult, perhaps, to make



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out the deepest indentation of the *exergue*. Like Coleridge he should be regarded as one who might have done much had he been satisfied with attempting but little.

### CCXX

The art of Mr. Dickens, although elaborate and great, seems only a happy modification of nature. In this respect he differs remarkably from the author of *Night and Morning*. The latter, by excessive care and by patient reflection, aided by much rhetorical knowledge and general information, has arrived at the capability of producing books which might be mistaken by ninety-nine readers out of a hundred for the genuine inspirations of genius. The former, by the promptings of the truest genius itself, has been brought to compose, and evidently without effort, works which have effected a long-sought consummation, which have rendered him the idol of the people, while defying and enchanting the critics. Mr. Bulwer, through art, has almost created a genius. Mr. Dickens, through genius, has perfected a standard from which art itself will derive its essence in rules.

### CCXXI

While Defoe would have been fairly entitled to immortality had he never written *Robinson Crusoe*, yet his many other very excellent writings have nearly



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faded from our attention in the superior lustre of the *Adventures of the Mariner of York*. What better possible species of reputation could the author have desired for that book than the species which it has so long enjoyed? It has become a household thing in nearly every family in Christendom. Yet never was admiration of any work—universal admiration—more indiscriminately or more inappropriately bestowed. Not one person in ten—nay, not one person in five hundred, has, during the perusal of *Robinson Crusoe*, the most remote conception that any particle of genius, or even of common talent, has been employed in its creation! Men do not look upon it in the light of a literary performance. Defoe has none of their thoughts—Robinson all. The powers which have wrought the wonder have been thrown into obscurity by the very stupendousness of the wonder they have wrought! We read, and become perfect abstractions in the intensity of our interest; we close the book, and are quite satisfied that we could have written as well ourselves. All this is effected by the potent magic of verisimilitude. Indeed, the author of *Crusoe* must have possessed, above all other faculties, what has been termed the faculty of identification—that dominion exercised by volition over imagination which enables the mind to lose its own in a fictitious individuality. This includes, in a very great degree, the power of abstraction; and with these keys we may partially

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unlock the mystery of that spell which has so long invested the volume before us. But a complete analysis of our interest in it cannot be thus afforded. Defoe is largely indebted to his subject. The idea of man in a state of perfect isolation, although often entertained, was never before so comprehensively carried out. Indeed, the frequency of its occurrence to the thoughts of mankind argued the extent of its influence on their sympathies, while the fact of no attempt having been made to give an embodied form to the conception went to prove the difficulty of the undertaking. But the true narrative of Selkirk in 1711, with the powerful impression it then made upon the public mind, sufficed to inspire Defoe with both the necessary courage for his work and entire confidence in its success. How wonderful has been the result!

### CCXXII

The increase, within a few years, of the magazine literature is by no means to be regarded as indicating what some critics would suppose it to indicate, a downward tendency in American taste or in American letters. It is but a sign of the times, an indication of an era in which men are forced upon the curt, the condensed, the well-digested, in place of the voluminous,—in a word, upon journalism in lieu of dissertation. We need now the light artillery rather than the peace-makers of the intellect. I will not be sure that men

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at present think more profoundly than half a century ago, but beyond question they think with more rapidity, with more skill, with more tact, with more of method and less of excrescence in the thought. Besides all this they have a vast increase in the thinking material; they have more facts, more to think about. For this reason they are disposed to put the greatest amount of thought in the smallest compass and disperse it with the utmost attainable rapidity. Hence the journalism of the age; hence, in especial, magazines. Too many we cannot have, as a general proposition; but we demand that they have sufficient merit to render them noticeable in the beginning, and that they continue in existence sufficiently long to permit us a fair estimation of their value.

### CCXXIII

One half the pleasure experienced at a theatre arises from the spectator's sympathy with the rest of the audience, and, especially, from his belief in their sympathy with him. The eccentric gentleman who, not long long ago, at the Park, found himself the solitary occupant of box, pit, and gallery, would have derived but little enjoyment from his visit had he been suffered to remain. It was an act of mercy to turn him out. The present absurd rage for lecturing is founded in the feeling in question. Essays which we would not be hired to read, so trite is their subject, so feeble is their

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execution, so much easier is it to get better information on similar themes out of any encyclopædia in Christendom, we are brought to tolerate and, alas! even to applaud in their tenth and twentieth repetition, through the whole force of our sympathy with the throng. In the same way we listen to a story with greater zest when there are others present at its narration besides ourselves. Aware of this, authors, without due reflection, have repeatedly attempted, by supposing a circle of listeners, to imbue their narratives with the interest of sympathy. At a cursory glance the idea seems plausible enough. But, in the one case, there is an actual, personal, and palpable sympathy, conveyed in looks, gestures, and brief comments—a sympathy of real individuals, all with the matters discussed, to be sure, but then especially each with each. In the other instance, we alone in our closet are required to sympathize with the sympathy of fictitious listeners who, so far from being present in body, are often studiously kept out of sight and out of mind for two or three hundred pages at a time. This is sympathy double-diluted, the shadow of a shade. It is unnecessary to say that the design invariably fails of its effect.

### CCXXIV

The qualities of Heber are well understood. His poetry is of a high order. He is imaginative, glowing, and vigorous, with a skill in the management of his

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means unsurpassed by that of any writer of his time, but without any high degree of originality. Can there be any thing in the nature of a "classical" life at war with novelty *per se*? At all events, few fine scholars, such as Heber truly was, are original.

### CCXXV

Original characters, so called, can only be critically praised as such, either when presenting qualities known in real life, but never before depicted (a combination nearly impossible), or when presenting qualities (moral or physical, or both) which, although unknown, or even known to be hypothetical, are so skilfully adapted to the circumstances which surround them, that our sense of fitness is not offended, and we find ourselves seeking a reason why those things might not have been, which we are still satisfied are not. The latter species of originality appertains to the loftier regions of the ideal.

### CCXXVI

*George Balcombe* we are induced to regard, upon the whole, as the best American novel. There have been few books of its peculiar kind, we think, written in any country, much its superior. Its interest is intense from beginning to end. Talent of a lofty order is evinced in every page of it. Its most distinguishing features are invention, vigor, almost audacity, of



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thought, great variety of what the German critics term "intrigue," and exceeding ingenuity and finish in the adaptation of its component parts. Nothing is wanting to a complete whole, and nothing is out of place or out of time. Without being chargeable in the least degree with imitation, the novel bears a strong family resemblance to the *Caleb Williams* of Godwin. Thinking thus highly of *George Balcombe*, we still do not wish to be understood as ranking it with the more brilliant fictions of some of the living novelists of Great Britain. In regard to the authorship of the book, some little conversation has occurred and the matter is still considered a secret. But why so?—or, rather, how so? The mind of the chief personage of the story is the transcript of a mind familiar to us, an unintentional transcript, let us grant, but still one not to be mistaken. *George Balcombe* thinks, speaks, and acts as no person, we are convinced, but Judge Beverly Tucker ever precisely thought, spoke, or acted before.







## Fifty Suggestions

### I

**I**T is observable that, while among all nations the omni-color, white, has been received as an emblem of the pure, the no-color, black, has by no means been generally admitted as sufficiently typical of impurity. There are blue devils as well as black; and when we think very ill of a woman and wish to blacken her character, we merely call her "a blue-stocking," and advise her to read, in Rabelais's *Gargantua*, the chapter *de ce qui est signifié par les couleurs blanc et bleu*. There is far more difference between these *couleurs*, in fact, than that which exists between simple black and white. Your "blue," when we come to talk of stockings, is black in *íssimo*, — *nigrum nígríus nígro*,—like the matter from which Raymond Lully first manufactured his alcohol.

### II

Mr. —, I perceive, has been appointed Librarian to the new — Athenæum. To him, the appointment

## Fifty Suggestions

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is advantageous in many respects. Especially, "Mon cousin, voici une belle occasion pour apprendre à lire!"

### III

As far as I can understand the "loving our enemies," it implies the hating our friends.

### IV

In commencing our dinners with gravy soup, no doubt we have taken a hint from Horace, who says,

Da si grave non est,  
Quæ prima iratum ventrem placeverit esca.

### V

Of much of our cottage architecture we may safely say, I think (admitting the good intention), that it would have been Gothic if it had not felt it its duty to be Dutch.

### VI

James's multitudinous novels seem to be written upon the plan of "the songs of the Bard of Schiraz," in which, we are assured by Fadladeen, "the same beautiful thought occurs again and again in every possible variety of phrase."

### VII

Some of our foreign lions resemble the human brain in one very striking particular. They are without any sense themselves, and yet are the centres of sensation.

## Fifty Suggestions

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### VIII

Mirabeau, I fancy, acquired his wonderful tact at foreseeing and meeting contingencies during his residence in the stronghold of If.

### IX

Cottle's *Reminiscences of Coleridge* is just such a book as damns its perpetrator forever in the opinion of every gentleman who reads it. More and more every day do we moderns *pavoneggiarsi* about our Christianity; yet, so far as the spirit of Christianity is concerned, we are immeasurably behind the ancients. Mottoes and proverbs are the indices of national character; and the Anglo-Saxons are disgraced in having no proverbial equivalent to the *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Moreover, where, in all statutory Christendom, shall we find a law so Christian as the *Defuncti injuria ne afficiantur* of the Twelve Tables? The simple negative injunction of the Latin law and proverb—the injunction not to do ill to the dead—seems, at a first glance, scarcely susceptible of improvement in the delicate respect of its terms. I cannot help thinking, however, that the sentiment, if not the idea intended, is more forcibly conveyed in an apothegm by one of the old English moralists, James Puckle. By an ingenious figure of speech he contrives to imbue the negation of the Roman command with a spirit of active and positive beneficence. “When speaking of

## Fifty Suggestions

the dead," he says, in his *Gray Cap for a Green Head*, "So fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are wrapped up in silence."

### X

I have no doubt that the Fourierites honestly fancy "a nasty poet fit for nothing" to be the true translation of "poeta nascitur non fit."

### XI

There surely cannot be "more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of" (oh, Andrew Jackson Davis!) "in your philosophy."

### XII

"It is only as the bird of paradise quits us in taking wing," observes, or should observe, some poet, "that we obtain a full view of the beauty of its plumage"; and it is only as the politician is about being "turned out" that, like the snake of the Irish Chronicle when touched by St. Patrick, he "awakens to a sense of his situation."

### XIII

Newspaper editors seem to have constitutions closely similar to those of the deities in Valhalla, who cut each other to pieces every day, and yet get up perfectly sound and fresh every morning.

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### XIV

As far as I can comprehend the modern cant in favor of "unadulterated Saxon," it is fast leading us to the language of that region where, as Addison has it, "they sell the best fish and speak the plainest English."

### XV

The frightfully long money-pouches, "like the cucumber called the Gigantic," which have come in vogue among our belles, are not of Parisian origin, as many suppose, but are strictly indigenous here. The fact is, such a fashion would be quite out of place in Paris, where it is money only that women keep in a purse. The purse of an American lady, however, must be large enough to carry both her money and the soul of its owner.

### XVI

I can see no objection to gentlemen "standing for Congress," provided they stand on one side; nor to their "running for Congress," if they are in a very great hurry to get there; but it would be a blessing if some of them could be persuaded into sitting still, for Congress, after they arrive.

### XVII

If envy, as Cyprian has it, be "the moth of the soul," whether shall we regard content as its Scotch snuff or its camphor?

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### XVIII

M——, having been “used up” in the —— *Review*, goes about town lauding his critic, as an epicure lauds the best London mustard—with the tears in his eyes.

### XIX

“Con tal que las costumbres de un autor sean puras y castas,” says the Catholic Don Tomas de las Torres, in the preface to his *Amatory Poems*, “importo muy poco qui no sean igualmente severas sus obras,” meaning, in plain English, that, provided the personal morals of an author are pure, it matters little what those of his books are.

For so unprincipled an idea, Don Tomas, no doubt, is still having a hard time of it in Purgatory; and, by way of most pointedly manifesting their disgust at his philosophy on the topic in question, many modern theologians and divines are now busily squaring their conduct by his proposition exactly conversed.

### XX

Children are never too tender to be whipped; like tough beef-steaks, the more you beat them the more tender they become.

### XXI

Lucian, in describing the statue “with its surface of Parian marble and its interior filled with rags,” must



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have been looking with a prophetic eye at some of our great " moneyed institutions."

### XXII

That poets (using the word comprehensively, as including artists in general) are a *genus irritabile* is well understood; but the why seems not to be commonly seen. An artist is an artist only by dint of his exquisite sense of beauty—a sense affording him rapturous enjoyment, but at the same time implying, or involving, an equally exquisite sense of deformity of disproportion. Thus a wrong, an injustice, done a poet who is really a poet, excites him to a degree which, to ordinary apprehension, appears disproportionate with the wrong. Poets see injustice, never where it does not exist, but very often where the unpoetical see no injustice whatever. Thus the poetical irritability has no reference to "*temper*" in the vulgar sense, but merely to a more than usual clear-sightedness in respect to wrong; this clear-sightedness being nothing more than a corollary from the vivid perception of right, of justice, of proportion—in a word, of *τὸ καλόν*. But one thing is clear, that the man who is not " irritable " (to the ordinary apprehension) is no poet.

### XXIII

Let a man succeed ever so evidently, ever so demonstrably, in many different displays of genius, the envy

## Fifty Suggestions

of criticism will agree with the popular voice in denying him more than talent in any. Thus a poet who has achieved a great (by which I mean an effective) poem, should be cautious not to distinguish himself in any other walk of letters. In especial, let him make no effort in science, unless anonymously or with the view of waiting patiently the judgment of posterity. Because universal or even versatile geniuses have rarely or never been known, therefore, thinks the world, none such can ever be. A "therefore" of this kind is, with the world, conclusive. But what is the fact, as taught us by analysis of mental power? Simply that the highest genius—that the genius which all men instantaneously acknowledge as such, which acts upon individuals as well as upon the mass, by a species of magnetism incomprehensible but irresistible and never resisted,—that this genius which demonstrates itself in the simplest gesture, or even by the absence of all; this genius which speaks without a voice and flashes from the unopened eye, is but the result of generally large mental power existing in a state of absolute proportion, so that no one faculty has undue predominance. That factitious "genius," that "genius" in the popular sense which is but the manifestation of the abnormal predominance of some one faculty over all the others, and, of course, at the expense and to the detriment of all the others, is a result of mental disease or, rather, of organic malformation of mind;

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it is this and nothing more. Not only will such "genius" fail, if turned aside from the path indicated by its predominant faculty; but, even when pursuing this path, when producing those works in which, certainly, it is best calculated to succeed, will give unmistakable indications of unsoundness in respect to general intellect. Hence, indeed, arises the just idea that

Great wit to madness nearly is allied.

I say "just idea"; for by "great wit," in this case, the poet intends precisely the pseudo-genius to which I refer. The true genius, on the other hand, is, necessarily, if not universal in its manifestations, at least capable of universality; and if, attempting all things, it succeeds in one rather better than in another, this is merely on account of a certain bias by which taste leads it with more earnestness in the one direction than in the other. With equal zeal it would succeed equally in all.

To sum up our results in respect to this very simple but much *vexata questio* :

What the world calls "genius" is the state of mental disease arising from the undue predominance of some one of the faculties. The works of such genius are never sound in themselves, and, in especial, always betray the general mental insanity.

The proportion of the mental faculties, in a case where the general mental power is not inordinate,

## Fifty Suggestions

gives that result which we distinguish as talent; and the talent is greater or less, first, as the general mental power is greater or less; and, secondly, as the proportion of the faculties is more or less absolute.

The proportion of the faculties, in a case where the mental power is inordinately great, gives that result which is the true genius (but which, on account of the proportion and seeming simplicity of its works, is seldom acknowledged to be so); and the genius is greater or less, first, as the general mental power is more or less inordinately great; and, secondly, as the proportion of the faculties is more or less absolute.

An objection will be made, that the greatest excess of mental power, however proportionate, does not seem to satisfy our idea of genius, unless we have, in addition, sensibility, passion, energy. The reply is, that the "absolute proportion" spoken of, when applied to inordinate mental power, gives, as a result, the appreciation of beauty and horror of deformity which we call sensibility, together with that intense vitality which is implied when we speak of "energy" or "passion."

### XXIV

"And beauty draws us by a single hair."—Capillary attraction, of course.

### XXV

It is by no means clear, as regards the present revolutionary spirit of Europe, that it is a spirit which

## Fifty Suggestions

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“ moveth altogether if it move at all.” In Great Britain it may be kept quiet for half a century yet, by placing at the head of affairs an experienced medical man. He should keep his forefinger constantly on the pulse of the patient, and exhibit *panem* in gentle doses, with as much *circenses* as the stomach can be made to retain.

### XXVI

The taste manifested by our transcendental poets is to be treated “ reverentially,” beyond doubt, as one of Mr. Emerson’s friends suggests, for the fact is, it is Taste on her death-bed—Taste kicking *in articulo mortis*.

### XXVII

I should not say, of Taglioni, exactly that she dances, but that she laughs with her arms and legs, and that if she takes vengeance on her present oppressors she will be amply justified by the *lex talionis*.

### XXVIII

The world is infested just now by a new sect of philosophers, who have not yet suspected themselves of forming a sect, and who, consequently, have adopted no name. They are the Believers in everything Odd. Their high-priest, in the East, is Charles Fourier, in the West, Horace Greeley; and high-priests they are to some purpose. The only common bond among the

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sect is credulity—let us call it insanity at once and be done with it. Ask any one of them why he believes this or that, and, if he be conscientious (ignorant people usually are), he will make you very much such a reply as Talleyrand made when asked why he believed in the Bible. “I believe in it, first,” said he, “because I am Bishop of Autun; and, secondly, because I know nothing about it at all.” What these philosophers call “argument,” is a way they have *dénier ce qui est et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas*.<sup>1</sup>

### XXIX

K——, the publisher, trying to be critical, talks about books pretty much as a washerwoman would about Niagara falls or a poulterer about a phoenix.

### XXX

The ingenuity of critical malice would often be laughable but for the disgust which, even in the most perverted spirits, injustice never fails to excite. A common trick is that of decrying, impliedly, the higher, by insisting upon the lower merits of an author. Ma-caulay, for example, deeply feeling how much critical acumen is enforced by cautious attention to the mere “rhetoric” which is its vehicle, has at length become the best of modern rhetoricians. His brother reviewers—anonymous, of course, and likely to remain so forever—extol “the acumen of Carlyle, the analysis of

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelle Héloïse*.



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Schlegel, and the style of Macaulay." Bancroft is a philosophical historian; but no amount of philosophy has yet taught him to despise a minute accuracy in point of fact. His brother historians talk of "the grace of Prescott, the erudition of Gibbon, and the painstaking precision of Bancroft." Tennyson, perceiving how vividly an imaginative effect is aided, now and then, by a certain quaintness judiciously introduced, brings this latter at times in support of his most glorious and most delicate imagination; whereupon his brother poets hasten to laud the imagination of Mr. Somebody, whom nobody imagined to have any, "and the somewhat affected quaintness of Tennyson."—Let the noblest poet add to his other excellence, if he dares, that of faultless versification and scrupulous attention to grammar. He is damned at once. His rivals have it in their power to discourse of "A, the true poet, and B, the versifier and disciple of Lindley Murray."

### XXXI

The goddess Laverna, who is a head without a body, could not do better, perhaps, than make advances to "La Jeune France," which, for some years to come, at least, must otherwise remain a body without a head.

### XXXII

H—— calls his verse a "poem," very much as Francis the First bestowed the title, *mes déserts*, upon his snug little deer-park at Fontainebleau.

## Fifty Suggestions

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### XXXIII

Mr. A—— is frequently spoken of as “one of our most industrious writers”; and, in fact, when we consider how much he has written, we perceive at once that he must have been industrious, or he could never (like an honest woman as he is) have so thoroughly succeeded in keeping himself from being “talked about.”

### XXXIV

That a cause leads to an effect is scarcely more certain than that, so far as morals are concerned, a repetition of effect tends to the generation of cause. Herein lies the principle of what we so vaguely term “habit.”

### XXXV

With the exception of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*, I have never read a poem combining so much of the fiercest passion with so much of the most delicate imagination as the *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* of Miss Barrett. I am forced to admit, however, that the latter work is a palpable imitation of the former, which it surpasses in thesis, as much as it falls below it in a certain calm energy, lustrous and indomitable, such as we might imagine in a broad river of molten gold.

### XXXVI

What has become of the inferior planet which Decuppis, about nine years ago, declared he saw traversing the disk of the sun?

## Fifty Suggestions

### XXXVII

"Ignorance is bliss," but, that the bliss be real, the ignorance must be so profound as not to suspect itself ignorant. With this understanding, Boileau's line may be read thus:

Le plus fou toujours est le plus satisfait,

—" *toujours* " in place of " *souvent*."

### XXXVIII

Bryant and Street are both essentially descriptive poets; and descriptive poetry, even in its happiest manifestation, is not of the highest order. But the distinction between Bryant and Street is very broad. While the former, in reproducing the sensible images of nature, reproduces the sentiments with which he regards them, the latter gives us the images and nothing beyond. He never forces us to feel what we feel he must have felt.

### XXXIX

In lauding beauty, genius merely evinces a filial affection. To genius beauty gives life, reaping often a reward in immortality.

### XL

And this is the "American Drama" of——! Well! —that "conscience which make cowards of us all" will permit me to say, in praise of the performance, only

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that it is not quite so bad as I expected it to be. But then I always expect too much.

### XLI

What we feel to be fancy will be found fanciful still, whatever be the theme which engages it. No subject exalts it into imagination. When Moore is termed "a fanciful poet," the epithet is applied with precision. He is. He is fanciful in *Lalla Rookh*, and had he written the *Inferno*, in the *Inferno* he would have contrived to be still fanciful and nothing beyond.

### XLII

When we speak of "a suspicious man," we may mean either one who suspects, or one to be suspected. Our language needs either the adjective "suspectful," or the adjective "suspectable."

### XLIII

"To love," says Spenser, "is

To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,  
To speed, to give, to want, to be undone."

The philosophy here might be rendered more profound by the mere omission of a comma. We all know the willing blindness, the voluntary madness of Love. We express this in thus punctuating the last line:

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To speed, to give—to want to be undone.

It is a case, in short, where we gain a point by omitting it.

### XLIV

Miss Edgeworth seems to have had only an approximate comprehension of “fashion,” for she says: “If it was the fashion to burn me, and I at the stake, I hardly know ten persons of my acquaintance who would refuse to throw on a fagot.” There are many who, in such a case, would “refuse to throw on a fagot”—for fear of smothering out the fire.

### XLV

I am beginning to think with Horsley, that “the People have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them.”

### XLVI

“It is not fair to review my book without reading it,” says Mr. Mathews, talking at the critics, and, as usual, expecting impossibilities. That man who is clever enough to write such a work is clever enough to read it, no doubt; but we should not look for so much talent in the world at large. Mr. Mathews will not imagine that I mean to blame him. The book alone is in fault, after all. The fact is that, *er lasst sich nicht lesen* (it will not permit itself to be read). Being a hobby of Mr. Mathews’s, and brimful of spirit, it will let nobody mount it but Mr. Mathews.











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